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THE

# DUBLIN REVIEW

*Edited by T. S. GREGORY*

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Deus, qui solemnitate paschali mundo remedia contulisti: populum tuum quaesumus coelesti dono proseguere; ut et perfectam libertatem consequi mereatur, et ad vitam proficiat sempiternam. Per Dominum.

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## NEWMAN AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE

IT is not generally appreciated how much of Newman's classical work on the Development of Doctrine and of his many essays and sermons touching upon this subject consists of a psychological analysis of the manner in which the Word of God, once it has been sown in the living mind of man, goes through an inevitable process of growth. Whenever a living idea takes hold of men, it grows both within their individual minds and through the interaction of mind upon mind within the community. The Holy Ghost has used this peculiarity of man's mind to lead the Church through the ages to a clearer and more explicit grasp of the original divinely revealed Word. Much has been written since the time of Newman, from the strictly theological, and even from the metaphysical, point of view, concerning the extent and limits of such doctrinal evolution; but very little has been added to his contribution with regard to the actual psychological process. Yet there must be a psychological process. The Word of God does not exist as a real internal word except in living minds; first, in the living mind of God, and then in the living minds of those to whom God reveals it. It is owing to the fact that living human minds are always growing that there is such a thing as development of doctrine at all. "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often." This must be understood in the sense of what follows, and not as implying that there is change in the actual meanings of the dogmas which develop.

There is no need at the present day to defend the theological doctrine that dogma develops. There was a time when the very notion shocked people. But now we have a well-established science known as the History of Dogma. We have become so accustomed to the whole idea of growth, new definitions, and dogmatic development, that we are willing to admit that the process in some of its phases is going on at all times. Some people look forward boldly to more growth, more definitions, and a long history of dogma in the future. Not all are agreed as to the advisability of pushing forward this movement. Newman would have abhorred the notion. But Newman would have

been one of the first to admit that no one can stop the process, except by the expedient of killing the living Word.

Non-Catholics sometimes think that the process can be pushed along by arbitrary definitions, whenever the Pope feels so inclined. This is not vital growth, and infallibility does not so work. Infallibility rather supposes the growth, and merely steps in to decide whether any so-called growth has been true to the revelation which it pretends to express. The process which is thus supposed is a phenomenon, which is only partially open to observation, going on in the minds of millions of individuals. One of the great wonders of God's providential guidance of His Church is that he leads the way to infallible decisions through the painstaking gropings of fallible minds.

Newman wrote in his *Essay on Development*: "If Christianity is a fact, and impresses an idea of itself on our minds and is a subject-matter of exercises of the reason, that idea will in the course of time expand into a multitude of ideas, and aspects of ideas, connected and harmonious with one another, and in themselves determinate and immutable, as is the objective fact itself which is thus represented. It is a characteristic of our minds, that they cannot take an object in, which is submitted to them simply and integrally."

This fact was long obscured by a more important theological principle, which was at one time thought to be in contradiction with living growth and change; viz. that revealed truth is eternal and immutable, and was given once and for all to the Christian Church before the death of the Apostles. As long as the fact of the growth of all ideas in living minds could not be reconciled with this immutability of divine truth, Catholics tended to defend the latter and deny all growth. Protestants, on the contrary, having begun by denying dogmas, readily admitted the principle of growth at the expense of unchanging truth.

The matter came into peculiar prominence at the time of the Oxford Movement, since the main objection of the young Oxford Anglo-Catholics was that, while Rome admitted the important principle that dogmas do not change, it had yet admitted considerable development to take place within itself, both in dogmas and in practice. For a while, Newman was content to protest against Roman exaggerations and additions, while claiming that the Oxford party was remaining true to primitive Christianity. However, one difficulty after another compelled him to weaken his hold on a position which he had long feared was academic and artificial. He decided to reconsider the whole Roman position, and see whether the so-called additions and changes were not merely signs of a life which was absent in his own communion;



and, if that life was the life of the Holy Spirit working through men, it was nothing less than a life, which grew and expanded, merely to preserve itself pure and intact. The analogy of the life of man impressed him. The more perfect a man is, the more his life is full of adaptations, which at first sight might appear to be changes, but which merely serve to preserve all his original perfections true to themselves. In a changing world, the perfection of life consists in preserving itself from the surrounding corruption. Food is assimilated, not to change the living thing into the likeness of the food; but to preserve the strength of life, even at the cost of the corruption of its food. This idea, as applied with due modifications to Christianity, eventually expanded into his Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine.

The value of his study is manifold. Hundreds of books have been written by Catholics on the various aspects of his theory, as applied to theology. Perhaps the most enlightening aspect of all is the vision it gives us of the actual life and growth of the Body of Christ in the knowledge and wisdom of its Faith. There was an unfortunate caricature of Newman's doctrine put forward by the Modernists. They retained the living growth, but rejected the unchanging truth, which the Church grows in order to preserve. Some of them quoted the name of Newman. People that had not read Newman were disturbed. But eventually all fears were allayed; and the final result was a still better understanding of the beauties and lasting truth of Newman's theory.

But I am only concerned here with the psychological aspect. For the sake of avoiding confusion, I would like to note first a few vital truths, which are often forgotten or not noticed. First, may I again insist that the original deposit of doctrine was handed down to the *minds* of the first Christians long before it was put on paper? The real doctrine never departed from living minds, since paper is incapable of containing any of the living truth it is the instrument of conveying. If this is so, then the object of revelation will be no different from the object of faith. That which was explicitly revealed will be the same as that which the first Christians explicitly understood and believed; and likewise everything which they believed explicitly had been explicitly revealed to them. For, if the doctrine had not been explicitly accepted, it could in no sense be said to have been explicitly handed down. Whether a doctrine be implicit or explicit depends entirely upon the recipients. In the case of the early Church, the recipients were the living minds of the faithful. One or other individual may have been ignorant of some doctrine of the faith; but the whole body received the whole doctrine

to be handed down to their children by the exercise of authority of its bishops.

Secondly, it should be borne in mind, as a psychological fact which governs the whole argument, that no doctrine in our minds is ever wholly explicit. Indeed, for one explicit aspect, there must be an infinity of aspects which are merely implicit. For every expression used by a speaker, his audience gain a larger number of subconscious impressions, which make their mark, perhaps affect their lives, and may not be expressed for a number of years.

But we must realize that what is thus impressed upon our minds is really received; what is implicitly taught is really taught; and what is implicitly believed is formally believed. Moreover, what is once known, even if only implicitly, cannot be learnt afresh; it can only be made more clear. I use the word "implicit" here in a sense which some theologians call "formally implicit". In this sense, when we say that the Immaculate Conception was implicitly believed by the Early Church, we mean that it was really known, though few could have been reflexively aware of it, and perhaps none would have understood the terms of its expression. Anyone, by reflecting on himself, will realize that he has a vast field of knowledge which he has not yet learnt how to express. Occasionally he hears someone express a truth, which he declares he has all along held, but never been able to put it into words.

Consequently, if what is believed implicitly comes to be recognized explicitly, it does not mean that a new revelation has been made to the mind—and yet there has been a gain in explicit knowledge, though not really a gain in knowledge pure and simple. A gain in knowledge would mean that something, whether implicit or explicit, has been added to our knowledge, which we never knew before. It follows then that true development is real development, in so far as there is deeper penetration and understanding, but there is no real addition to knowledge. This is how Newman understood development in all that he ever wrote. Development is an unfolding; and you can only unfold what has been there all along.

Theologians are wont to distinguish between the teaching and the learning Church. The private individual as such is a member of the learning Church, and can add to his knowledge revealed doctrines which he did not know before, as well as develop what he has long known implicitly. But the infallible teaching authority, consisting either of the Supreme Pontiff, the Fathers in Council, or the universal hierarchy of bishops, or the whole body of the faithful, cannot be said between them

ever to have been ignorant of anything which has at any time been either explicitly or implicitly accepted by its members from the Apostles. And since it is not entitled to pretend to any new revelations, it can do no more than add a degree of explicitness to what was beforehand merely implicit.

How does this passage come about? It would seem that it must be impossible to examine the process, since the first stage, the implicit stage, would be of its nature inaccessible to our investigation. To be implicit it must not be realized; and yet, if held at all, it must have been formally or really known or believed. Contradictory as these notions might appear, this is one of the most certain realities of life. Newman taught long before psycho-analysis the importance of a subconscious life, which is yet a real kind of knowledge influencing our actions, and often giving to them all their rationality and morality. It is their very hiddenness which has often made it difficult for Catholics to meet Protestant challenges of the antiquity of our beliefs.

No one today will pretend that to hold a doctrine we must advert to it. Doctrines received at an early age and acted upon during many years of a lifetime may seem strange when first encountered in all their explicit nakedness. Our first reaction may even be to deny them. Before the subconscious is realized, psychologists recognize that a number of factors must intervene to prepare our system for what may even be a shock to us.

As a positive criterion psychologists admit that it is a sufficient proof of our implicit acceptance of a doctrine if either our beliefs or our actions necessarily imply such doctrine. Most of the success attained by the methods of modern psychology of the unconscious have been due to acting upon this theory.

It is then no argument that the early Christians did not hold the Immaculate Conception to say that they neither adverted to it, nor would realize it as part of their belief when confronted with it for the first time. But it would be a definite argument in favour of their acceptance, if their other doctrines or actions inevitably implied it. Nowhere is the same principle better illustrated than in the history of the development of the Canon of Sacred Scripture. Long before the Church explicitly canonized our present list, its members, under the influence of the Spirit, were using books of scripture, both of the Jewish and of the Alexandrian canon, as though they were the Word of God. And yet, during that same period, there were instances where individual Fathers hesitated to recognize explicitly those books which they implicitly received. Another clear example of a doctrine acted upon before explicit recognition would be that of

the doctrine of Purgatory implied in prayers and sacrifices for the dead.

Likewise we can say that a person holds a doctrine implicitly, if that doctrine is inevitably bound up with his explicit beliefs or actions. For, if this were not so, how could he really hold his explicit beliefs? How could a Christian firmly believe explicitly that Christ's personality was divine without implicitly holding that nature can be distinguished from personality?

Newman and, later on, Father Marin-Sola both insisted that anything which can be deduced from a doctrine explicitly held by a process of strict metaphysical reasoning must from the beginning have been held implicitly. Thus, if one holds explicitly that he is a creature, he must hold implicitly that there is a Creator. Not all theologians have applied this simple principle to the passage from implicit to explicit in dogmatic truth; although objections brought up against it always seem to be based upon deductions which do not follow by rigid metaphysical inference. Actually such deductions would not be defined by the Church as part of the original revelation, unless they happened to be matters of faith or morals. But, since metaphysical inference cannot draw from premisses a doctrine which is not contained implicitly in them, it would seem to follow that a man holds implicitly anything which can be so drawn from his explicit beliefs. It does not affect this theory of course to contend that he in no sense realizes that such a strict logical connexion exists, until he has seen the actual process.

It is necessary to bear in mind that such deductions are first made by members of the learning Church, and they have not the gift of infallibility. So it may be that I will deduce a doctrine from the teaching or practice of the Church, which is not really part of the original revelation. My reasoning process will be unsound, and my conclusion false. This is why it was part of God's providence to add to His gift of revealed truth the complementary gift of an infallible authority. It is the function of this authority to decide, when necessary, whether such conclusions reached by the fallible members of the Church are faithful to the original deposit. Such infallible authority never pronounces on the reasoning which led to the conclusion.

The actual passage in fallible minds proceeds partly by natural processes of inference, and partly through the use of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. For the guidance of the Holy Spirit is not only found in the final decision of the infallible Church, but also in a rather different office of helping individuals to penetrate more deeply into the meaning of the faith.

In considering this aspect of the Mystical Body of Christ in

its actual life, we shall wonder at the way in which the human with all its weakness is knit with the Spirit which brings to our minds all things whatsoever Christ has taught.

There is then a twofold process, one more human, and the other more divine. There is nothing to prevent both co-existing in the same mind. The one way is by the application of our common powers of inferring a new truth from any other truth which we have accepted whether by faith or self-evidence; the other is a sort of internal instinct or disposition or mental keenness and experience of God which comes to some of the faithful—especially to such as are more saintly—through using the gifts of the Holy Ghost. All this is what we should expect in God's dealings with us—who belong to that mystical body which carries on the work of the incarnation, and is thus at the same time human and divine. God is pleased to bring about an increase of our knowledge of things supernatural both by using our natural powers and by a personal direction through our noblest supernatural powers.

Let us consider the natural process first. This, we have said, is a process of reasoning. The most obvious example is that of the theologian who by sheer force of reasoning explains revelation or rejects heresy. Sometimes his conclusions are accepted officially by the Church and a new definition, say, consubstantiality, is defined.

Is this the normal way in which truths are developed through the natural reason? If we are to believe Newman, it is rather a comparatively unusual method. Most people are in the habit of reasoning informally, and find it a considerable effort to reduce their argumentation to logical form. When they do, as often as not they misrepresent themselves or give someone else's arguments instead of their own.

Why does such and such a man accept, for instance, the genuineness of the Gospel miracles? Perhaps a large number of reasons combine in his subconsciousness to enable him to accept that conclusion. He probably could not formulate them in syllogisms. Perhaps, if one could analyse the process in his mind, it would be something like this: First of all he accepts the existence of God. He believes that God governs the world, that he wishes the salvation of men; that the light of nature is not sufficient for man to reach his end; that there is no other obvious way of introducing men to the supernatural order than the way of miracles. He has no reason to doubt that the Apostles, who were simple and unsophisticated men and no impostors, would not have acted as they did, if it had not been for miracles. He can see no antecedent reason why the author of nature should



not have power over His world. All these arguments combined work together in the mind of the believer to form a reasonable basis for his belief in miracles. Such is the natural way of human reasoning. But most men could not express it. Ask the individual above described why he believes in a miracle. He probably would find it difficult to answer. Perhaps he would go to a book and look up an argument, and come back giving you the reason why someone else professes to believe in miracles. It is precisely because most reasoning is informal, and because it is at the same time unconscious, that rationalists and freethinkers find it so easy to persuade someone who is ill-instructed that his belief must be unreasonable if he cannot readily produce his reasons.

As Newman expresses it: "All men have a reason; not all can give a reason." The chief difficulty for the reader of Newman himself is that he argues on paper in the same informal way in which men argue in their innermost minds. Many readers of Newman have complained that they felt as though they were being inveigled when reading his works, because they could see not any flaw in the argument, and yet it seemed to work itself out in such a haphazard way.

The mind described in the following passage is undoubtedly Newman's own. "The mind ranges to and fro, and spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become proverbial, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation. It passes on from point to point, gaining one by some indication; another on a probability (i.e. as far as formal logic is concerned); then availing itself of an association; then falling back on some received law; next seizing on testimony; then committing itself to some popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory; and thus it makes progress not unlike a clamberer on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand, and firm foot, ascends how he knows not himself, by personal endowment and by practice, rather than by rule, leaving no track behind him, and unable to teach another."

For centuries the minds of Christians have been thus exercised upon the Christian Revelation. Most often they have reasoned informally. Mary set the example in her hidden life at Nazareth. In Newman's famous Sermon on the Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine, he has the following passage with regard to Our Lady, in connexion with the passage "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart"; "She does not think it enough to accept, she dwells upon it; not enough to assent, she develops it; not enough to submit the Reason, she reasons upon it; not indeed reasoning first, and believing after-



wards, with Zacharias, yet first believing without reasoning, next from love and reverence, reasoning after believing. And thus she symbolizes to us not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the doctors of the Church also, who have to investigate, and weigh, and define, as well as to profess the Gospel; to draw the line between truth and heresy; to anticipate or remedy the various aberrations of wrong reason; to combat pride and recklessness with their own arms; and thus to triumph over the sophist and the innovator." And so it has come about that revealed doctrines have been continually compared with one another and with external truth. Expressions have been modified. Impressions have become expressions. And in all there has been the anxious desire not to change but to preserve. And the teaching Church has watched the process—sometimes lovingly approving, sometimes anxiously checking. When her children have reasoned their way to some needed explanation, she has spoken infallibly in their name. Their efforts had been fallible. Not all had met with her approval. Some attempts had been condemned. And in all God has used human minds as his instruments, and the Church has grown in wisdom and in grace.

But it pleases God to confirm and sometimes even to displace all these efforts by mere human reasoning to discover what is implicitly revealed. It is as though He sometimes decides to take the matter more directly in hand. He has always one means ready at hand. All Christians in a state of grace are endowed with certain gifts. Through these gifts He can, in a sense, speak to the Christian soul and direct it towards Him.

And this has introduced us to the second way in which the process of development can take place—through the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. This second way does not exclude the first, and it might be argued that it always carries the first along with it; although the truth cannot apply vice versa.

Two gifts in particular enable the ardent Catholic to penetrate more deeply into the mysteries which he has learnt by hearing and grasped by faith. The right understanding of the use of these gifts shows us what is true in the old-fashioned Protestant doctrine of private inspiration. After the Christian soul has been made a son of God and lifted up to the supernatural order, it is not left to itself. In addition to the grace of sonship and the vital supernatural powers of faith, hope and charity, it enjoys the special personal presence of the Spirit. And with it the Spirit brings special gifts, foremost among which are the two intellectual gifts of *understanding* and *wisdom*. The soul which learns to use these gifts as they were meant to be used rapidly

becomes in a high and wonderful sense divinized. In the highest degree, it is in everything led by the hand of God. Through the first gift the soul enjoying such union is enabled to penetrate as it were instinctively into the truths of the faith and to distinguish them from all counterfeits. Good Catholics chiefly differ from indifferent ones in the instinct they possess in virtue of their divine *understanding*. They sense sound doctrine from heresy. It is a faculty of judgement rather than of reasoning.

The second intellectual gift is that of *wisdom*. If we are to believe St. Thomas, it enables the possessor to reason in a supernatural manner and by a supernatural kind of instinct upon the data of faith, under the influence of personal experiential mystical knowledge of the Supreme Cause. Isolated mysteries now appear as parts of a great harmonious whole. The world of God appears as one with many aspects. It is this gift above all which enabled the great doctors of the Church to reason their way with such firm sure steps to a true explanation of the great articles of the deposit. It is this gift which determines the common consent of the faithful to some new development, such as the devotion to the Sacred Heart or the mystical Body of Christ. Not so much has been written of the part played by the Holy Ghost in developing doctrines through the gift of wisdom. The reason for this is partly because, while it is easy for the theologian to trace the course of an argument, especially when formal, it is almost impossible for him to follow the very private informal and usually unknown working of the divine spirit in the minds of the faithful. And so what is perhaps the most important factor in the development of many of our doctrines remains an unknown quantity.

But even these divine processes work through the human intellect. Truth comes in to the intellect and whether in a natural or a supernatural way, it grows there. And the result in all cases is for the implicit to become more explicit. And what is reached in one way can, at least theoretically, be reached in the other. So that developments divinely "sensed" are no less logically deducible from the deposit than developments humanly deduced. This is but theoretically so. In practice the human mind will often fail to be able to make the deduction.

But though all development takes place through processes of the intellect, it is not without a great impulse from the will. And this is why Christianity must, above all, develop. For Christianity is a religion of love, the greatest love the world has seen. And love is the stimulus of all contemplation of the intellect, and the driving force of all growth. It was love which drove the Christians to clamour for the title Mary Mother of God. It was love which called for the feast of Corpus Christi.

Now we have seen what happens when a doctrine develops. We have traced the processes which are the fallible instruments of such development. It but remains in conclusion to refer to the culminating work of God in all this scheme.

All is perfected—the fallible becomes protected from the danger of being misled by its fallibility—through the exercise of her office by the teaching Church. When the Supreme Pontiff, the Fathers of the Council, the Bishops of the hierarchy throughout the Church speak with no uncertain voice confirming the results of our research and meditation—then we believe that what we thought was in the deposit really was there, and is as surely to be believed as what we previously explicitly accepted. None other can demand our allegiance of faith. *Our reason*, however clear, can but demand the certainty of reason, even when it argues from premisses of faith. None but the voice of Peter or his Church can command our *faith*.

Let us end with the example of the Immaculate Conception. Some theologians argued formally that it had been implicitly revealed; others reasoned implicitly to the same conclusion. Some were led by a supernatural sense of understanding and wisdom in the teeth of reasoning to the contrary. And finally the Holy Spirit guided the Church to recognize officially that her children who had so reasoned had been guided by God and had arrived at the truth. Then, and not till then, all accepted it as part of the faith. And the final result is that the Holy Spirit through the Church bears witness that the Immaculate Conception was revealed to the Apostles and taught at least implicitly to the first Christians.

I venture to claim that there is room for much fruitful study in the deeper penetration and wider application of Newman's peculiar methods of inquiry into the way in which the Holy Spirit leads his chosen ones through an ever-changing, ever-dying world into the eternal abodes of truth.

H. FRANCIS DAVIS.



## HOW ENGLAND LOST THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION\*

(Conclusion)

THE Reformation was more than the repudiation of a theory or a body of theories held intellectually, sentimentally effective, operative upon men's wills. It destroyed a reality which exists outside men's minds and is beyond any power of theirs to construct, the divinely placed communication line between the Infinite and His creature, the appointed channel of grace; it cut the whole social tradition from the root through which it was supernaturally enlivened. The whole habit of mankind did not, thereupon, in an instant twinkling of the eye, become other than what it had been; not all the twigs and leaves on the severed limb withered at once.

But Protestantism is a thing essentially different from Catholicism; it is not a religion at all in the sense in which Catholicism is a religion; for the Christian Tradition there could be no future in a Protestant world. Only in so far as there were Catholics, and in so far as these could influence that world, would any traces of it really survive: elsewhere, despite appearances, it was from the moment of the change slowly, inevitably, dying. In the history of the last four hundred years we can, without any great difficulty, trace this twin phenomenon, the Christian social habit—as we have seen its fourfold expression—steadily decaying in the mass of the nation now no longer Catholic, and just as steadily putting forth new shoots, bearing all the characteristic fruit—albeit scanty fruit, for the climate is harsh and unfriendly—in the small remnant faithful to Catholicism.

We first of all note that the public worship of God as a characteristic of ordinary life has, today, all but ceased in England, outside the Catholic Church. A current religious handbook that gives all the statistics of Church membership, officially supplied by the various bodies, accounts thus for a mere 25 per cent of the population: three quarters of the souls of the nation are an acknowledged, spiritual "no man's land". This is a terrible fact: and recognized as a fact, and as terrible, by all parties. Now of this small minority that still acknowledges the need of what is called "organized religion"—just one quarter of our population—we Catholics form about one third. In that

\* Address delivered 6 August, 1944, at Ampleforth Abbey, to the Newman Association.

minority we are, again, a minority—and yet, when estimates are made of the numbers attending public worship, ours are actually found to be almost equal to all the rest, and we certainly lead. This is as much as to say, that even for that minority of non-Catholic Englishmen affiliated to any religious body, the regular public worship of God is not any longer an obvious Christian duty.

To this, then, has it come—the system which destroyed the Christian Tradition of sacrifice, and punished with death those who defended that tradition and continued to offer the sacrifice; the system which, moreover, made attendance at the substitute service an act of civic duty, and compulsory—for neglect of which the criminal courts inflicted fines and other penalties; the system which, later still, degraded the most sacred even of the new Protestant rites into a condition *sine qua non* for high political office. “Is this man going to make his peace with Heaven, and repent him of his sins? . . . No, he goes to the communion table only because he has lately received the appointment of First Lord of the Treasury!” So said Fox, unrebuked, in the House of Commons. It is little wonder that, by the end of the eighteenth century, the churches were emptier even than they are today. The mid-nineteenth century saw, indeed, a great revival of the practice of public worship, based on the two great emotions of Evangelicalism and Ritualism, and sustained by the effective preaching of the last generations of clergy whose absolute acceptance of their gospel it never even entered their people’s minds to doubt. And now this tide also has ebbed.

Against this national abandonment of the Christian Tradition by the heirs of the Reformation the Catholics have continued to make the best defence of all, by their fidelity to the duty of Sunday Mass; and, I suppose, each of us could bring his own small piece of evidence to support the assertion that, in this matter, our conduct is observed, and that this sustained open witness bears its fruit, if only in the recognition and the admission, so often made, that the Catholic religion is “different”. Our forefathers, in the critical hour, gave their all for this point of the Tradition—their very lives indeed: no doubt we reap, in our faithfulness to it in easier times, graces they won for us. I do not think we can exaggerate the importance, to England, of our general attendance at Mass. Here the Christian Tradition certainly speaks to the nation still, and it is heard.

The teaching of religion is the centre of all education: we come to our second, social expression of the Tradition. Even when the true religion ceased to be taught—when it was forbidden

under heavy penalties to teach it—the idea long survived among the heirs to the new tradition that knowledge about God should inform the whole educational system. The idea survived just so long as Anglicanism's control of the Legislature survived—lasting far beyond the time when the nation could still be said to accept Anglicanism. But once the secret infidelity of the eighteenth century began to come into the open, when the political and social effects of the French Revolution had once broken up, and forever, the surface calm of the old "Church and King" England, the first steps were presently taken to establish an educational system in which religious knowledge should have no place.

We may fix the critical date as 1825, and for the significant event choose the foundation of the London University, of which Lord Brougham was the guardian archangel and Jeremy Bentham the divinizing spirit. It was now, also, that, for the first time, "the country" was awakened to the two related facts, namely that, in the national interest, some education was needed for the poor, and that scarcely any of the poor were receiving any education at all. And by this time the strong, anti-dogmatic party—the "Liberals" of Newman's devastating exposures—was to the fore. In part it comprised Benthamite infidels, the new highly moral freethinkers of the mid-nineteenth century—*ipsis Christianis Christianiores*; in part extreme Nonconformists, bent on moving Acheron since Anglicanism still locked the better place against them. It is in the plans for the education of the poor sponsored by this party, and in the party's determination to break the hold of the Church of England on the ancient universities, that the rot starts which has, by this time, all but divorced the idea of education from that of religion as truth which can be really ascertained, known and taught; the rot which has finally made an end of the idea that religion as a true knowledge, therefore, must be the centre of all education worthy of the name; and to the progress of that rot the religious tradition bred of the Reformation has more and more contributed as the years have gone by.

Step by step, in the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the religious element in the system was whittled away; while in the new provincial universities, now beginning to be founded, scarcely ever is there place for more than a specialized department of religious studies for those intended for the ministry. Nowhere is it any longer considered that the study of religious truth is a necessary part of the Christian Englishman's higher education.

Also—in the system of schools now devised to teach the



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elements of knowledge, the same forces, from about this same time, the middle of the nineteenth century, slowly and steadily gain the mastery. In 1870 the public authority set up its first schools, built and wholly maintained at the public cost. It was the will of those whose immense activity engineered the agitation, and forced educational reform upon the last of the Victorian Whig cabinets, that the teaching in these schools should be wholly secular. But there was opposition to this, a bitter fight, and, in the end, the compromise of Cowper-Templarism: a compromise which, from the first, worked for the advantage of the secularist party; and which, in seventy years, has produced the present generation to whom God is but a word.

In the long war against this second social element of the Christian Tradition, the Catholics, small remnant that they are, again have not been idle. Their heroism—for heroism has been demanded of them, down to the days of our childhood, and it seems about to be demanded of them once more—began in the first fierce years of the Elizabethan establishment, when, beyond the seas, they set up those famous schools whence came, for two centuries, a host of martyrs and confessors; schools where, in these years, there was established a tradition of practical everyday Catholicism, of an extremely tough type, that is still far from dead.

And then, even before the laws were repealed which forbade a Catholic to keep a school, in the very depths of the worst depression of all, in the mid-eighteenth century, the Catholics founded in England the two schools which today are Cotton and Old Hall. No sooner, in 1791, was it once more lawful for a Catholic school to exist, than Catholics began the heavy task of providing schools for their working people—then, as now, the vast bulk of the Catholic community. For forty years, in the London slums, and in the truly infernal slums of the new industrial towns, side by side with their churches, the Catholics built schools; for forty years before any Government ever thought to set aside a penny of public money for education. That great effort has gone on ever since; and in an age when schools where religious knowledge is the very centre of the system have been steadily disappearing, the number of these Catholic schools has continued to increase. Here, indeed, Catholics have maintained the Christian tradition: though not victorious, we have been heard—and what we have said will not be forgotten.

To these Catholic elementary schools we must add the tale of the innumerable secondary schools, the array of public schools, and the training colleges: and all has come out of the scanty

purse of the small Catholic minority, in an age when every circumstance has cried out how needless such sacrifices are. Here is practical fruit of conviction, living expression of fidelity to the Christian Tradition, to the belief that "to take religion out of the system of education is to take the spring from out of the year".

Those words are, of course, Newman's; and, as I reminded you of the nineteenth century's dreary work of destruction, you were, I doubt not, impatient until I spoke his great name. In "The Tamworth Reading Room", and in "The Idea of a University", John Henry Newman spoke like a prophet—as indeed he was—to his own age, and to ours. Here is the Christian Tradition in education set forth in all its splendid reality; no mere apology, nor any sterile negation of protest; but a clear, dispassionate analysis of the fake now for the first time presented for the nation's acceptance, and a constructive proposal, so that the Christian Tradition should once again walk among us in visible form in the highest schools of all.

For Newman did not only theorize. This genius—whose conversion a hundred years ago was God's greatest offer to our *Ecclesia Anglicana*—set himself to organize that Catholic University without which the Catholic life of any people must, necessarily, be a thing incomplete. Most valiantly, he strove to turn the temporary expedient of a small majority of the Irish bishops into a stronghold, where the Christian Tradition might for the moment be secure, in that time of storm and tempest, and whence, in happier days, it might issue forth, to win the willing allegiance of the world by the vision of its own strength and beauty. Catholics, at any rate, should have the means to perfect their intelligences with knowledge suitably ordered around the knowledge of things divine.

It is no part of our business—here, today—to review the history of Newman's relation to the Catholic University of Dublin: let us be grateful for that. But the prophetic message remains; and some day, perhaps, somewhere it will bear fruit among us.

And now, what of that third element of the Christian Tradition, the Christian Family? Two points especially call for mention. The Christian family is, of all human institutions, the most stable; the Christian child knows a security beyond all others; for the marriage whence the Christian family springs is indissoluble. Never will the father be able to wander away from it as the acknowledged, lawful husband of another woman. And the Christian marriage is such because it is a contract that

is sacramental; the status of Christian marriage is a thing devised by God: a status to be taken or left—but which cannot be tampered with or altered. But, to the new tradition substituted for Christianity in the sixteenth century, marriage was not a sacrament—it was a way of life only; and thus cut from its sacramental root, marriage, among non-Catholics, presently lost, as it was bound to lose, its quality of indissolubility. This was inevitable; it was in the nature of things.

The first divorces date from the seventeenth century; and they are achieved through the cumbrous (and expensive) machinery of two lawsuits and a private Act of Parliament. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, and through the first half of the nineteenth, the number of such divorces, however, increases; and then, ninety years ago, in 1857, comes the great invention of the Divorce Court. I say invention deliberately; for such it was, the entire jurisdiction in matrimonial cases passing now from the officials of the Church to the officials of the State. Since then the flood of divorces has risen; it continues to rise ever more rapidly; and, at the same time, the idea that marriage itself is a holy thing has quite gone under. Marriage and divorce are now passing out of the sphere of morals for the heirs of the new tradition, as the conduct of married intimacy has also long since passed out of it; all is becoming a matter of good form, of convenience, of personal arrangement.

The second boon with which the Christian Tradition enriched the family was its clear, strong insistence that the parents had not only duties but rights—in some matters exclusive rights—over the training and upbringing of their children. We know how little regard is paid today to such ideas as this; and how a kind of parent is being produced who is interested in nothing so little as his parental rights. And it is important, surely, to note historically what a breach with the Christian Tradition the anti-Catholic laws of James I achieved when, in order to induce a Catholic child to apostatize, it was enacted that the heir should, upon such apostasy, enter immediately upon his inheritance; and when the Catholic child was taken away and brought up a Protestant against the Catholic father's will; and when the Protestant husband was made liable to punishment for his wife's Catholicism.

We come to the fourth social evidence of the Christian Tradition—the English Common Law. Here we may recall among the sixteenth-century religious novelties one that is particularly noxious to any Christian tradition of law, namely the theory which allows a man to make his own notions of

right and wrong; and, associated with this, the new idea that liberty means doing what you like so long as it does not hurt the man next door; and the theory that all men, because they are men, have a right to be free in this sense. Ultimately, once the belief in the doctrinal primacy of the pope is rejected, and the reality of moral absolutes is denied, there will disappear the idea of an overruling law of God, clearly and certainly ascertainable, to which all men are subject. There will inevitably spring up such theories as that of the divine right of kings to be totalitarian, and of the natural right of states to be the same.

Now it was not Anglicanism, nor Protestantism, that invented these aberrations in the domain of Ethics and Natural Law; they derive from that unhealthy late mediaeval time, whence came the new religions also; but the new religions removed what alone could have checked these growths, the living Christian Tradition of Law.

There was abroad, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, a very widespread tendency to laud the absolutist state as the sovereign remedy for the ills of the commonwealth. Our own kings, about this time, ceased to be as parliamentary as had at one time seemed likely; special courts were set up for special offences, and in these it was not the Common Law doctrines which regulated the proceedings; there was a new sympathy for that Roman Law whose spirit so greatly favours the growth of absolutism in princes; and presently, in England, a hundred years after Henry VIII, it all boils up into a furious controversy between James I and the great judge whom the lawyers called Lord Coke; and into a still more furious conflict between Charles I and a section of his parliament. It is most pertinent to our subject that, in the reaction against the incipient absolutism of the Stuarts, it was to the Catholic origins of the Common Law that the parliamentary champions appealed; to Fortescue and, above all, to Henry of Bracton. If 1641 and 1688 are victories for the Common Law, the instrument of those victories is the Christian Tradition that the executive is itself subject to law, to its own laws even, that the king is *sub Deo* and *sub lege*.

As you know, the Reformation princes in England, at the very outset of the religious revolution, carefully made it impossible for Catholics to practise at the Bar; a prohibition that remained in force for two hundred and fifty years nearly. One of the last of the Catholic common law men was the great Edmund Plowden, Queen Elizabeth's Lord High Chancellor, had he but conformed—a rich, creative, scholarly mind really eminent among English lawyers; and across the intervening

centuries the first Catholic to take silk in the better times, Charles Butler, is the last great commentator of Coke on Lyttleton before the Victorian reform comes to sweep all that learning away.\*

Catholic Action, defending the Christian Tradition, resisting the substitute put in its place, is writ large in the pages of English history. What of Catholic Thought? What Catholic minds have really made a contact with the English mind in the last four hundred years? This is not the same question, as though we were asking what Catholics are writing books that the generality of people are reading—for Catholics may write books that do not touch on Catholicism at all. Are there any Catholics, then, in these years, who strive "to put Catholicism across"? Who are they? What is their effect? Here is matter for a vast historical enquiry, scarcely as yet begun: the answer, when we have it, will tell us—what, assuredly, it would be profitable to know—how far Catholicism has influenced English life since it ceased to dominate it.

Let me, at any rate, suggest one or two ideas, and recall from undeserved obscurity some of the greatest names of our history. The first place must go to that band of writers who, in Elizabeth's time, fought the actual innovators, the conscious destroyers of the Christian Tradition. These writers were, many of them, lecturers and professors at Oxford and Cambridge; and across the seas, in the universities, at Louvain, and in the new university at Douay especially, which they did so much to found, they continued to study theology, to teach it, and to pour out an unceasing stream of popular controversy and learned informed criticism. Men such as Allen (of Oriel), Harding and Stapleton (of New College, both), the Jesuit Robert Persons, a Balliol man, were by no means mere controversialists. Their successful handling of the sham as they saw it set up by their contemporaries and erstwhile colleagues has been the first reason for the oblivion in which, for centuries, they were left. They wrote in Latin, and they wrote in English—masterly English, a whole forgotten chapter here in the "continuity of English prose".

What did their work accomplish? This at least, that the Reformers knew well they were under the constant observation of the outmanœuvred party; the time-serving apostates were continuously halted and harassed by the very evident survival of these men who really knew them; the victors were ever uneasy; and the ghosts of the truths they had abandoned never ceased to haunt the authors, and even the heirs, of the national apostasy.

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\* The Christian Tradition in Law was the subject of a special address,

These Catholic writers kept English theological thought in touch, willy-nilly, with Catholicism; they made it impossible, by the fact that they were Englishmen still loyal to the tradition, resisting novel ideas and not propounding them, for Catholicism to be easily misrepresented as a thing essentially un-English; and no doubt the Catholic ideas which they forced upon the unwilling attention of their adversaries did something to keep religion in England from the last dark extremities of Luther and Calvin and Zwingli. Something of this influence is possibly to be divined in the reaction from Calvinism of the Anglican doctors of the seventeenth century.

Harding had routed Jewel when, in 1562, that Elizabethan bishop had put forth the first systematic attempt at a theological justification of the Queen's Religion. Thomas Stapleton, a generation later, fought with the Regius Professor at Cambridge, a first-class Calvinist, William Whitaker. In the seventeenth century Matthew Kellison, one of the great presidents of Douay College, continued the exposure of "the New Religion" against Bishop Montague, and later Henry Holden argued the vital matter of schism with Bramhall. Challoner, in the next century, dealt so severely with Middleton, in a controversy about miracles, that his adversary invoked the penal laws against him. About the same time Edward Hawarden—whom James II had, in 1688, for a brief few weeks, installed as divinity lecturer at Magdalen—was arguing for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity against Dr. Samuel Clarke, and towards the end of the century one who was rather less of a theologian than any of the Catholics so far mentioned was in serious trouble for his only too successful exposure of Clarke's disciple Bishop Hoadley; this was John Milner.

All of these writers broke through the barrier of the national satisfaction with the national ideas about religion. Through them the Christian Tradition undoubtedly "registered"; as it did also through the very different work of Alban Butler, whose *Lives of the Saints* had very many more readers than were Catholics.

But the writer whom, above all others, we know really to have influenced the English Protestant mind was Lingard—the greatest scholar we have produced since the sixteenth century. Many years ago my work led me to study the criticisms that greeted Lingard's *History of England* in the great quarterly reviews of one hundred and twenty years ago: the judgements there expressed are a real revelation of Lingard's stature as non-Catholic contemporaries—Hallam, for example—saw him; and they are an explanation of the immense effect of his work on the



general educated world until well beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. That so many as ten editions of this ten-volume work were called for in thirty years points very evidently to a circulation that far exceeded the needs of the then small circle of educated Catholics.

Lingard, bred at Douay College before the French Revolution, lived long enough to see the Oxford Movement. It was his pupil Charles Newsham who, as president of Ushaw, is said to have impressed the neophyte Newman more than any Catholic he had met, save Wiseman only. With Newman's name, and the memory of his conversion, it is fitting to end this all too hasty survey. For no Catholic has ever, before or since, so spoken to the mind and heart of the England of the new tradition as he. Today is the tenth Sunday after Pentecost, and in the Mass St. Paul, looking to the past, reminds us, *You know that when you were heathens you went to dumb idols, according as you were led. But it is also the glorious feast of Our Lord's Transfiguration, and St. Peter, in that liturgy, gives the message the present hour awaits. We have not followed cunningly devised fables . . . we have the more firm prophetic word, whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts.*

PHILIP HUGHES.

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## REFLECTIONS ON ACADEMIC ETHICS

WHAT philosophers think today is harvested by the world tomorrow. Or so it is said. If it were true, philosophical theories of morals would be of direct importance. However, the relation between theory and action is not, after all, so simple as that, nor is it a one-way relation: it was not the *Contrat Social* that begot the French Revolution, nor was it the impact of sheer thought in Rousseau that stirred France; still less was it the clarity and strength of Bentham's theorizing that shaped nineteenth-century England. Indeed, the names of Bentham and Rousseau should remind us that the thought that historically has influenced practical life is not usually thought which succeeds as thought; it is rather the confused and half-thought-out theory which evokes unregenerate emotions and is linked to a precise

object and a definite goal—a goal pursued on other grounds which theory comes to justify.

These are indeed depressing considerations. But they do but suggest the gloom that settles on one when one sits down to describe the contemporary condition of moral philosophy. Of course, one is half paralysed by the difficulty of describing simply and briefly a situation that is complex, or of doing justice to the peculiar anatomy of contemporary moral philosophers. Yet under all the complexity there is one feature of ethics today that is characteristic and makes for the deepest gloom. But how is one to communicate the quality of it without an appearance of rudeness or of *simplisme*? For it is a pervasive atmosphere of aridity and unreality—the sensation of sitting stiffly in a hermetically sealed room to which only a muffled noise penetrates from the life outside.

Tenants of the house,  
Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

The pursuit of purity in ethical thought has quarantined ethics from every other kind of thought so successfully that moralists have been known to wonder what their subject is about but to be fairly confident that its value must not be rated too highly. After all, when muddleheaded and confused theories have been disposed of, what is there left to do, they say, except to reflect on and clarify the ethical judgements that we habitually make and the ethical beliefs that as ordinary men we entertain?

Let me take a particularly harmless instance of what I have in mind. "I should be more impressed," says Dr. A. C. Ewing,\* "by the differences between the Nazis and ourselves as regards, e.g. the treatment of Jews, if I were convinced that the Nazis really wished to find out the truth about whether it was good to send Jews to concentration camps. If they do not want to find out the truth about this question, their opinions on it do not even deserve the respect which is implied by any suggestion that our differences with them cast doubt on the objectivity of ethics." This is true—as far as it goes. But how does it come about that so much is left unsaid, we feel, that such a philosophy moves in a two-dimensional world? It is no mere flippancy that brings to mind an apt criticism of the neo-gothic:† "their madonnas were always genteel, their saints always venerable, butter would not melt in their angels' mouths; and the awful events of the

\* *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1941-2, 85; see also the same author's paper in *Mind*, April 1944.

† Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival*, 287.

Apocalypse were conducted with the decorum of a garden-party".

This criticism is severe, and not obviously polite. Presently I shall attempt to give it greater precision. But it seemed worth while to direct attention at once to what is the gravest inadequacy of academic moral philosophy in this country. After all, ethics is at first sight a subject neither remote nor abstract, for it deals with how human beings ought to live. Yet in fact, I think, the majority of undergraduates has come to find it a dull and deadening subject. This is a disquieting phenomenon. For if accurate thinking leaves the soul parched, then (in the absence of religious belief) a young mind may well turn with relief to theories that are confused and rotten but exciting, or may look for warmth to the guidance of the emotions.

But to explain the contemporary situation and to make this criticism more precise, it is necessary to trace some possibly tedious history.\*

Two types of moral philosophy (one might almost say two types of mind) are the staple ingredients of the British tradition. Each has its own attraction, and each its characteristic bewilderment. The first is now disreputable in the philosophical faculties of universities, but survives vigorously in their psychological and scientific circles.† It is exemplified in writers as diverse as Hume and Mill and Green and Bosanquet and Westermarck, and is at first sight impressive: such writers appear to be illuminating for us the concrete but mysterious judgements of good and evil by relating them to judgements of other kinds and setting them in a context of other human appreciations and interests and of desires. But sooner or later there comes a moment when we rub our eyes and find that the distinctively ethical has been spirited away: hardly have moral judgements begun to be scrutinized before there are clapped on to them interpretations and interpretative conceptions taken over from epistemology of psychology or metaphysics or the natural sciences. If we are so bold as to confess it to ourselves, we find that in this tradition the principle of explanation or intelligibility in ethics is little other than the interpretation of ethical data in terms of something that to the philosophers in question is more engrossing—or is the procuring of an intellectual satisfaction that is not far removed from a sense of mastery in imposing a manifest and simple order

\* The sketch that follows is necessarily condensed and allusive. Readers who find it obscure may be referred to the relevant pages of Dr. Joad's *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics*.

† See, for instance, Professor Julian Huxley's *Romanes* lecture of last year, and the debates in *Nature* some two years ago. (For a characteristic criticism of Huxley, from Professor C. D. Broad, see *Mind*, October 1944, 344-67.)

on what is *prima facie* very complex and higgledy-piggledy. Modern discussions of the relations of science and ethics are palmary instances of what I have in mind. Though less civilized and sensitive, they are in the tradition of empiricist and idealist moralists, whose saving grace (one thinks in this mood of bewilderment) is sophistication. Is the study of morals nothing more than the application of techniques, and ethics nothing more than descriptive psychology?

This bewilderment is paralysing enough. But it also inclines to cynicism. For in it lurk, I think, two disquieting queries that have been raised in the mind and left unanswered. Philosophers such as I have been describing do think that they are doing something worth while; they think that they are making moral conduct intelligible and explaining the reasonableness inherent in it, and in doing this they find intellectual satisfaction. But what is involved, we wonder, in *explaining* anything? Here the moralists have started from certain phenomena, moral judgments and notions of conduct, and have transformed them into something else—satisfaction of the self (say) by harmonization of its desires or interests or emotions or what not—and this they have done because, presumably, there is something about the conception or self-satisfaction or self-realization which satisfies the demands of the intellect; it is “a model of what is clear and comprehensible, and the process of explanation consists in explaining all the phenomena . . . in the terms of this model”.<sup>\*</sup> But is anything explained when it is “explained” in terms of something *else*? And does not the principle of explanation turn out to be something entirely relative and unanchored, almost a matter of taste? To exhibit the reasonableness of moral conduct is for a Plato, for instance, a programme of quite a different kind than it is for Hobbes or for Hume, for whom reasonable conduct spells enlightened self-interest; and a newtonian physicist owns canons of intelligibility quite different to those of an aristotelian biologist.

But, secondly, it strikes us as a little odd that whatever principles of explanation these moralists avow, in fact their so-called practical deductions from them always yield roughly the same conclusions; whatever account they may give about the nature of moral goodness or of the self in which this goodness is displayed, they agree about what kinds of things or actions are good or bad. This is embarrassing rather than consoling; for if the

<sup>\*</sup> T. E. Hulme, *Speculations*, 176. So elsewhere Hulme declares that if you strip off a philosopher his panoply of technical method and discursive argument you are liable to find a man who just likes eating tarts in a pantry. He desiderates, therefore, what he calls a “critique of satisfactions”.

reason for it be that they are parasitic on a moral tradition that is all the time suggesting those judgements of what is right which they think they are deducing, we are left wondering what those judgements would be if that moral tradition were to be altered or to decay. "It is only by remaking man himself," writes Dr. Karl Mannheim, "that the reconstruction of society is possible." With what voice would these philosophies speak in our new world of Social Psychology?

This, then, is one component of the British tradition in moral philosophy. But the moralists in our universities today will have nothing of it. Their great directive is Bishop Butler's adage, "everything is what it is and not another thing", and the "naturalism" that I have been describing is taboo. They insist very clearly that moral judgements and conceptions are not disguised propositions and concepts concerning public or private emotional responses or fulfilments of desire of any sort, and they scrutinize and analyse ethical notions without whittling away what is distinctive in them. This is a fine school, and it has done much valuable work. It is represented in the writings of Professor G. E. Moore\* and Professor C. D. Broad of Cambridge and of the so-called deontologists or intuitionists at Oxford, and over minds preoccupied with problems of moral theory as *moral* theory it exercises considerable sway. And naturally: for when a man has been buffeted by the psychological and other sophistications of naturalism, to come to a mode of philosophizing which sweeps them away and exposes their confusions is felt as a purification like that of cold sunlight after the oppressiveness of a sultry night.

But in the end this school, too, is inclined to induce just as much bewilderment, and it is this bewilderment that deserves analysis; for among contemporary students of ethics it is widespread. It has, I think, three sources.

The first is this. There is a centuries-old topic in moral theory, the topic of duty and interest. In what sense, if at all, philosophers have asked, is it "advantageous" to be morally good? The naturalists argued for a close connexion between being morally good and being "a better man" for it, but so described the connexion that moral goodness had no longer any distinctive meaning. The non-naturalists of today, in their anxious concern for the integrity of moral notions, tend to declare that there neither is nor can be any relation whatever

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\* Moore (whose influence has been considerable) describes himself as a utilitarian. But in spite of his method and of the view of goodness that he held at the time of *Principia Ethica*, his ethical doctrine is closely akin to intuitionism. Straightforward teleological ethics died in England with Henry Sidgwick.

between morality and any kind of advantage or happiness or natural perfection. Into the intricacies of this hoary but complicated debate this is not the place to enter; it is enough to indicate some of the consequences of the modern answer. For these consequences are that moral goodness is so completely disassociated from any notion of human excellence that it comes to mean simple conscientiousness; it is segregated, therefore, from any possible reference to natural perfection or to "the constitution of human nature", so that the consideration of emotion and desire is entirely an irrelevance in ethical theory. Only conscientiousness matters; the quality of other interests of a man does not matter. These are arid consequences. They make it quite impossible to account for the real, historical development of a conscience or for the genuine measure of relativity that is found in differences of moral outlook in different cultures. And (to take a particular instance) the fascinating question of the influence exercised on a person's moral quality by native or acquired vulgarity of imagination or taste, or by certain sorts of stupidity, is a question which, if the deontologists are right, could hardly arise.

Moreover, a scrutiny of their positive doctrine reveals, I think, that it rests on a view of intuition in morals which is exceedingly odd. This is that accurate intuition is within the capacity of any normal and normally educated adult; but what a normal education consists of is not made clear, for it is held that ethical intuitions are crystal-clear and distinct, without peripheral half-lights in the intelligence or resonances in emotion and desire; in fact, it is taken as manifest that when a man intuits something about right and wrong he is performing the same sort of mental act as he performs when he intuits the truth of a proposition in mathematics: the only difference lies in the subject-matter\*. Further, being severally clear and distinct, these intuitions are exercised not only in independence of an isolation from non-ethical intuitions and judgements but also in isolation from other ethical ones.

This is the doctrine which, with the consequences to which it leads, is responsible for those aridities and unrealities of contemporary moral theory that I indicated earlier. As an account of moral judgement it leaves out everything that is most interesting

\* This is to be understood strictly. At bottom, for instance, the reason why Professor H. A. Prichard and his followers maintain that the question: Why is lying (say) wrong? is a pseudo-question is to be sought in the presupposed Cartesian epistemology which they inherited from Cook Wilson. For it is plausible that it is silly to ask: Why do two and two make four? as if one were really sceptical about the truth of that proposition in mathematics until one had been given the reason why it was true.



and everything that is distinctive. Knowledge in moral matters is assuredly possible; but if it were of the type exemplified in mathematics (as this is usually construed) it would have no problems. To take a quite simple example, though an ethical judgement is not the rationalization of a sheer emotional response, yet there does appear to be some connexion between the capacity to come to truth in the judgement and the rightness of the response. But why is it that such intuition seems to be suspended in air? The reason—and it is a serious consequence of the theory—is, I think, that when we ask what it is that is characterized as right or wrong in this philosophy the answer turns out to be strangely elusive. What is right and wrong, it is said, is “acts”, like “killing” *tout court*, and these “acts” appear to be actions contemplated at a level of abstraction at which they are indistinguishable from events.

This last remark is obscure and calls for explanation. In order to clarify it I must attempt to convey a third characteristic of our modern theory that is particularly baffling; for it merges into a vague but very present background of history. According to the now discarded naturalistic doctrines, even when moral judgements are more than disguised propositions in descriptive psychology or what not, they are none the less dependent on non-moral judgements: they are dependent in the sense that they logically follow from beliefs in psychology or sociology and so on. This is the famous “naturalistic fallacy”. The exposure of this fallacy has, however, induced philosophers to think that moral judgements are in no way dependent on non-moral ones, but (being instances of knowledge in their own right, so to speak) are autonomous, that is, are isolable from all other beliefs and judgements of the man who makes them.\* You just “reflect” about morals, clear away ambiguities and confusions, and then you *see* what acts are right and wrong.†

There is a price to pay for this alleged autonomy and indepen-

\**Mutatis mutandis*, Malinowski's complaints about anthropology are relevant here too. “We can only plead for the speedy and complete disappearance from the records of field-work of the piecemeal items of information, of customs, beliefs, and rules of conduct floating in the air, or rather, leading a flat existence on paper with the third dimension, that of life, completely lacking. With this the theoretical arguments of Anthropology will be able to drop the lengthy litanies of threaded statement, which make us anthropologists feel silly, and the savage look ridiculous.” (*Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, p. 126.)

† Consistently with all this, it is thought nowadays, as a matter of pedagogy, that ethics is a comparatively simple and straightforward subject, fit to start the philosophical tyro on, whereas metaphysics is a business so tortuous as to yield (at best) nothing but obscure probabilities.

A sound and familiar distinction is indeed drawn between ethical judgements and “judgements about matters of fact”, the latter giving the results of an analysis of the whole situation before one. But the application of the distinction is limited and unfruitful.

dence. For acts that are characterized as right or wrong are not symbols in some geometry of ethics, nor are they just physical events: they are acts performed by human beings, and such acts, at whatever level of abstraction they are considered, retain some reference to the concrete; and in the concrete what such and such an act is, what its nature is, cannot be read off directly from observation of its character as a physical event. For example, infanticide is a different act (though the same event) according as an infant is conceived of as a sentient but not yet human animal, or as human indeed but not yet a person, or as a unique embodied soul immediately created by a personal God. If, again, people sincerely believe that a condition *sine qua non* of the maintenance of the marriage contract is the permanence of the love between husband and wife, and if also by love they understand a disposition of soul to which a certain state of the emotions is indispensable (both beliefs being themselves part of a hang-over from the very sophisticated and individualistic conception of human nature that is customarily termed romanticism), then on these presuppositions, were they true, such people would see divorce as not only permissible, on occasion, but as a duty.

I have just mentioned romanticism. It is a vague word, but I am meaning by it the outlook of a Rousseau or a Hölderlin or a Pater. Now when in a famous passage Walter Pater says that "of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake", Pater is propounding not simply a theory of artistic response but also a theory of morals, and (as Mr. Eliot has observed) the disapproval that greeted this conclusion to the first edition of *The Renaissance* is implicitly a recognition that it is a serious statement of ethics. Well then, we may well ask, if a man thoroughly accepts, on psychological or other grounds, a Pateresque conception of human nature, is it open to him to regard as self-evident the moral obligations that most people aver to be intuitively known?\*

What is the lesson of all this? Is it anything more than that, although you cannot deduce the morality of anything from your non-ethical knowledge or belief about that thing, yet you cannot

\* The influence of Romanticism on morals and politics has been well studied by Irving Babbitt in his *Rousseau and Romanticism*. He thought it entirely pernicious. He overlooked, however, one of its profoundest influences on morals; for together with the renaissance it was a powerful factor in combating a certain strain of utilitarianism apparently endemic in the European mind, a reluctance to admit that intrinsic goodness in any full and genuine sense can be ascribed to any human experience or condition. But it is not here that the pelagianism inherent in so many of the strands in romanticism is properly sought.

say anything about its morality until you know what the thing is—and that this knowledge may involve much more than is at first sight apparent? Yet even this much is very well worth saying.

But there may seem to be exaggeration here, and the point that I am trying to make may still be obscure. It may be well, therefore, to add something, however briefly, about the vague historical background to which reference was made earlier; in the history of thought ideas have a way of working themselves out to their consequences, whether or not a later generation is aware of what is happening.

To begin with an illustration, it may be said with confidence that there is hardly a philosopher today who would not assert, as something quite obvious, that when it is stripped of various frills and furbelows the ethics of natural law is none other than the ethics of conscience. So indeed it is; but it is much else besides. As Bishop Butler knew, it is central to the ethics of natural law that the author of the moral law is also the author of nature and human nature; and it is presupposed by that ethics that the "practical reason" by which a man apprehends good and evil is not distinct from a reason or intelligence by which he apprehends (and does not construct) the real in other fields as well; by which, for instance, he knows something of what his self is and of what nature human desires are, what community is and how he stands to an environment. Now to reduce the ethics of natural law to ethics of conscience is to do more than merely to lop off it the prestige of a theistic reference, as is often suggested, or to rob it of a sanction for everyman; it is more than an impoverishment. For when a contemporary moralist thinks of conscience, he thinks of it inevitably in a context of ideas coloured by Kantianism or by the afterglow of Kantianism. Conscience, therefore, tends to be regarded as a faculty for apprehending moral obligation that may or may not be, but more probably is not, on speaking terms with other ostensibly cognitive faculties. A philosopher may very well hold that what we call knowing is really constructing, or that to know the nature of anything is to relate and group discrete data of inner and outer sense into certain families or wholes, or is to apply a system of interpretation, the constructing or grouping or interpreting being governed by rules or conventions that derive from the psychological structure of the mind ("we're just made that way") or from "the syntax of our language" or from practical utility in the business of living and coping with our environment. He may very well be a determinist (as Kant was a psychological hedonist), and may consider emotions and other affections of the self as merely so many items of pathology. Yet

for all his phenomenalism in all these matters, he may none the less be a stout upholder of the ethics of conscience and a staunch defender of the "objectivity" of practical reason and our moral insights.\* No wonder if this air is so pure that it constricts the lungs.†

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us and we drown.

After all, long discourse can befuddle the mind and the obvious can get lost in the fenlands of theory, but surely the position that I have just described can only be called a monstrosity. Its incoherence is sterile, and its connexion with the way in which people do in fact think and feel about morals so tenuous that it is hardly matter for surprise if young men find it stifling, and rush off to some doctrine or other that makes morals a matter of emotion or of psychological fulfilment or is, at any rate, exciting. There is good reason for singling out aridity and unreality as the prime targets of our criticism of academic ethics.

This unreality I have traced to the belief that not only are moral judgements *logically* independent of non-moral ones (which is the truth that "naturalism" denies) but also are in every sense independent of them, whereas the truth is (and this is the truth that naturalism perverts and non-naturalism ignores) that right judgements in moral matters presuppose right judgements about a multiplicity of other things. But such an analysis has to face a clear and *prima facie* strong objection. However, the answering of it may serve to remove some obscurities that still remain.

If, then, right judgements about morals presuppose the rightness of other judgements, a change in a man's conception of the relation of the individual to his society (for instance) ought to herald a change in very many of his ethical judgements—indeed, not to dodge the issue by using an ambiguous word, it ought to bring about a change in many of his moral intuitions. Yet not only, it might well be argued, does it not do so, but on the contrary one may legitimately urge against a certain metaphysical or political theory that, if it were true, certain actions (compulsory sterilization, say, or the killing of Jews) would be

\* Yet the third part of Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* might have served as a grave warning against this kind of nonsense; for to safeguard the "objectivity" of the moral law and the principle that "ought implies can" Kant has to have recourse to systematic and confessed unintelligibility—the doctrine of phenomenal and noumenal selves and of two wills, and the consequent assertion of the timelessness, etc., of moral action.

† E.g. Professor H. J. Paton, *Can Reason be Practical?* (British Academy lecture, March 1943.)

morally right; whereas they are flagrantly and self-evidently immoral; therefore, the metaphysical or political conception in question cannot be true. But if your other beliefs can be brought to the bar before your ethical ones, then these latter are clearly unconditioned and independent of whatever else you believe; so that it is your other beliefs that are conditioned by your moral intuitions, and not *vice versa*. To this, however, there is a two-fold reply.\* First, that historically ethical insights do not turn out to be unconditioned in this fashion—totalitarianism has several precursors (the fact that totalitarianism does not start from “disinterested thinking about the universe” does not matter); and it is history, not the books of philosophers, that show us how men do in fact think. But secondly, we can reply that when morals are objected in criticism of a sociological view (say), what is really being objected is not one or more isolated and unconditioned intuitions but intuitions with what they presuppose, in this case another sociological outlook and another conception of man and his place in society; and this is in fact the course that an argument takes when such divergences in moral judgement are under examination.

This answer may not appear satisfactory, for the criticism that it is designed to meet has considerable plausibility. But this plausibility is readily intelligible. According to the criticism that I have been making, given the same common presuppositions a community of ethical insights among men is, in principle, to be expected. But until quite late in the history of European culture men shared roughly the same conceptions about “man and his place in nature” and society, and about the nature and destiny of the soul—roughly the same conceptions: where there was a difference, there was also a difference of moral judgement, as over infanticide and slavery or the alleged “Christian duty” of resignation. Now these conceptions bit all the more deeply into the tradition of culture in which generations have been brought up and lived, because they were communicated in the teaching of the Church. As they became traditional, they could be and were taken for granted; being taken for granted they could be ignored. Consequently, too, it was natural that when challenged by new notions with novel ethical consequences, they should be defended not merely in themselves (i.e. as sound psychology and so on) but also—and most warmly—on the terrain of apparently autonomous and independent ethics. (Hence, for example, the aura of immoralism that used to envelop Hobbes and Hume.)

\* In this connexion Bradley's *Ethical Studies* make interesting reading, with their characteristically Hegelian strictures on the arbitrariness of conscience, or the sociological works of Pareto.



This process was all the more natural in that the conceptions I am speaking of are (to use the phrase) common-sense conceptions\*: according to common sense human beings are morally free; they are individuals and persons, not limbs of a social organism; they are embodied rational souls and not just aggregates of impressions and appetites and instincts; they are distinct from their environment and yet related to it otherwise than by mere juxtaposition; though they are in a real sense the authors of their own actions, yet also they are in some sense dependent on God; they are in some sense immortal; and so on. In a homogeneous culture such conceptions will easily linger, out of sight and out of mind, in the moralist's criticism of a different metaphysic—and indeed even your uncommon-sensical metaphysician is not so completely inoculated against them as not unconsciously to presuppose them when he turns his attention to morals: in which case we are apt to say with too great simplicity, as we do of Locke and other empiricists, that his ethics is just inconsistent with his theory of knowledge. Moreover, very few minds are completely coherent, and bits and fragments of a common-sense outlook may survive pertinaciously even when a man has subscribed to a panoramic philosophy that has no place for them: Cartesians have been known to fall in love. So strong, then, has "common sense" become and so liable to infiltrate unobtrusively, that your modern moralist (accustomed to regard psychological and epistemological matters as far more complicated than ethical ones) will be quite sure that his moral insights do stand on their feet, presupposing nothing, and remain unaware that all the time common sense *is* infiltrating, and is, indeed, in the last resort, quite as metaphysical a matter as anything in the writings of the approved metaphysicians. Of criticism it is often and sensibly said that "in the perceptual judgement of the skilled critic far more is represented than the critic himself can put into words or

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\* I do not necessarily mean that they could be discovered by common sense, but that even when common sense had not so discovered them it never in fact had much difficulty in accepting them or in coming to see their truth for itself; the history of natural theology provides a fairly clear parallel. I do not suggest, either, that the influence of Christian teaching on ethics either is or can be limited to that described above, or is chiefly that.

By Christian teaching is meant that which is of faith, either defined or *ex magisterio ordinario*, or what is immediately implied by it. Other principles and conceptions may or may not be implicit in this or that episode of disciplinary practice or in the political record of ecclesiastics or this or that ascetical or theological fashion; but these are not Christian teaching in the sense indicated, so that their occurrence is irrelevant to the point at issue.

In these Barthian days, to say that Christian teaching declares or confirms common sense may seem a shocking liberalization of the revelation of the Kingdom of God and of the "new creation". But this is to misunderstand a plain truth elaborated through many a page of G. K. Chesterton.



give any account of. His judgement is the deposit of his relevant experience as a whole." It is no less true in morals.

Of course, to make much of common sense may be thought to be nothing but a flight into mystery or a confession of philosophical bankruptcy. For one man's common sense is another man's high blood-pressure. Quite certainly, as Plato never tired of repeating, whatever it is, it is liable to corruption and can never be a final arbiter. John Cook Wilson used to argue that distinctions made or applied in ordinary language are more likely to be right than wrong, as they have developed not in accordance with some system of reflective and abstract thought but "in what may be called the natural course of thinking, under the influence of experience and in the apprehension of particular truths"; but in history it is not unknown for philosophical distinctions to affect in the long run the idiom of popular language: Cartesianism has done so, and words like reason and imagination are no longer popularly employed as they were before the eighteenth century. Nor can one deny that in the history of cultures, no less than in that of individuals, there are moments of blindness to the most common and elemental sanities; and for all its persuasiveness the doctrine of the "unchanging human heart" cuts a poor figure today.

But the purpose of this article was to give a description of the contemporary situation in academic moral philosophy, and if under criticism this situation turned out to be unsatisfactory to attempt a diagnosis. It is no part of its purpose to be an ethical treatise, so that I am relieved of any obligation to trace the anatomy of that set of metaphysical and other judgements that are presupposed, as I have tried to show, by the moral judgements of practical reason. It is enough if it now appears questionable that these latter judgements are independent of all others, and unconditioned. For it is here that we are to locate the beginnings of the toxic anaemia which so sorely afflicts the moral philosophy of today. The unreality and aridity and devitalizing abstractness are undeniable, and they have their history, as we have seen. The peculiar and characteristic abstractness of modern ethics, such as I have attempted to describe, has its roots in a historical past. Yet knowing what it is, we can now account for it more simply. For surely ethics and the psychology of ethics are subjects in which distortion is the price paid for such abstractness. Philosophy is in large part a reflection on experience. But if so, it is no wonder if in the hands of its professionals it has grown desiccated and, like the Cumaean sibyl, shows pallid and withered in the sunlight; or if (in its latest evolution) it wants to die, apologizing for the original sin of its own existence.

Liberal theology tended to be moralistic through and through. Of Albrecht Ritschl it has been well said that he conceived of God "as accrediting Himself to our moral canons of what is good rather than as breaking *creatively* into our life and making all things new—even our conscience and its standards. Where revelation is, there is miracle; but miracle may be rejected or overlooked in the ethical sphere as much as in the physical."\* The observation applies with just as much force to much English theology until recently, and it expresses the habit of thought of many a philosopher today. So ethics, it is vaguely believed, is the touchstone of theological truth; educated men may differ about theology, but the differences are reconcilable, since about ethics they are at one. It is in the striking identity of their moral codes that men show where the genuine and abiding "community of man" is to be found, and where is the surest arsenal for the routing of the barbarisms and disintegrations that assail us. But if the argument of this paper is sound, we have here a profound mistake whose latter end is all too likely to be a cynical misology. For the community that we are in search of is not to be sought first in the sphere of ethics and then in other things, but first in those conceptions of the nature of man, in his relations to God and to his fellows and to nature, that are presupposed by ethics, and then in ethics. But these conceptions, "common sense" though they may be, would appear to be maintained in their integrity only in the teaching of the Christian Church; or rather, only there are they found lively and robust enough to quicken the dry bones of the moral philosophy in which our youth is being instructed. There is more in Europe than the Faith, but there is the Faith.

VINCENT TURNER, S.J.

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## PLATONIC MYSTICISM

**I**N the many books and articles which have appeared during the past generation, and still continue to appear, devoted to the study of the history and nature of mysticism, there are very frequently to be found references to a supposed tradition of "Platonic" or more precisely "Neo-Platonic" or, more generally,

\* H. R. Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology* (1937), p. 174; Mackintosh writes from a post-Kierkegaardian point of view.

"philosophical" mysticism. The interesting fact about these references is that when more precise details are given the only good and genuine example of a philosophical, Platonic, or Neo-Platonic mystic who is ever produced is the supremely great mystical philosopher of the third century A.D., Plotinus. This seems to suggest what I in fact believe to be true, that Plotinus, as a mystic, is a remarkably isolated figure within his own philosophical tradition. In the school of Plato there is no continuous succession of mystics such as is to be found among the Moslem Sufis, in certain German Protestant circles, among the Eastern Orthodox, and above all in Western Catholicism. On the other hand, though Plotinus's mystical experience is an isolated and unique phenomenon among the Hellenic Platonists, his philosophy of mysticism, his explanation of his mystical experience, original though it is in many ways, is undoubtedly the final product of a long and very complex metaphysical development.

In view of the enormous importance of Plotinus for all subsequent thought about mystical experience, and especially for Catholic mystical theology on which his indirect influence has been especially deep and continuous, it seems desirable to consider these two facts, of the isolation of Plotinus's mystical experience and the dependence of his mystical philosophy on the thought, especially, of his immediate predecessors, in some detail, and to see if any general conclusions can be drawn from them helpful to our understanding of the history and nature of mysticism.

Before beginning this more detailed survey it may be as well to define at least the most important of our terms. The adjective "mystical" has often been applied in the past (and still is applied by some imperfectly informed people) to all sorts of occultist or theurgic practices and beliefs which belong to the worlds of magic and superstition rather than those of religion and philosophy; and the term "mysticism" or "mystical experience" is often applied both to a variety of psycho-pathological states and to any sort of vague but strong intuition of a Ground of Reality behind phenomena as well as to the experiences described with considerable precision by those who are generally recognized as true mystics. It is in this last sense in which I propose to use the words, as referring to that experience of obscure contact or real union with (not simply intensely vivid perception of) the Absolute or Ground of Reality of which the great mystics try to tell us, while warning us of the utter inadequacy of human language to express it. This experience has many stages and degrees, from the first contact to the highest union possible in

this life, and in its earlier stages is perhaps commoner than is sometimes believed. I propose also to follow their teaching (it would seem to me gross impertinence to do otherwise) in holding that this experience is not merely negative in content and result, though it involves a complete abandonment of self and all lower realities (amounting even to complete unconsciousness of them), but is immensely positive and enriching.\* I hold also, on the highest authority, that the mystical union is essentially something "given", that the self-abandonment just mentioned must involve a recognition of the complete helplessness of the soul to unite itself to the Supreme by its own efforts; that in the highest states union can become very frequent and lasting, even habitual, and that it has a most beneficial effect on the intellect and character, producing a wisdom, humility and loving-kindness beyond the normal measure of men; finally that it is by this transformation of character that true mysticism is to be distinguished from its numerous counterfeits and distantly related lower states. It is in the light of this conception of the meaning of mysticism that I propose to inquire into its presence or absence in the Platonic tradition and into the nature of Plotinus's own experience.

The two points at which some trace of mysticism has been perceived by many modern interpreters in the school or tradition of Plato are the beginning, in Socrates and Plato himself, and the end, in the "Neo-Platonists", Plotinus and his successors (who are still sometimes not sufficiently clearly distinguished from Plotinus himself in general works and summary statements). The evidence that Socrates himself was in any sense a mystic is not of course the famous *δαίμωνιον* or "supernatural sign" (*Apology*, 31D), which has nothing to do with mysticism or religion at all, and was simply, as Professor Taylor says "a sort of uncanny flair for bad luck". It consists rather in the account given by Plato of certain "trances" or fits of abstraction to which his master was liable, of which the most remarkable was one which came upon him while he was serving before Potidaea, which lasted the whole of a day and a night (*Symposium*, 22cC-D). Now granted that the account given by Plato is reasonably accurate (which there is no reason to doubt), it seems to be

\* I am aware that this emphasis on the "positive" character of the mystical union, of which I shall have more to say later in direct connexion with Plotinus, may seem to contradict the evidence of the Hindu and Buddhist mystics. I am quite unqualified to discuss Indian mysticism, but it seems at least possible that in its supreme experience we are dealing with something very different from the mystical union of the Western tradition to which Plotinus, the Christian mystics, and the Sufis belong. Cp.: the short but valuable discussion by E. L. Mascal, *He Who Is*, pp. 132-5, and the references there given, also J. Maréchal, *Etudes sur la Psychologie des Mystiques*, Vol. I, *Quelques Traits Distinctifs de la Mystique Chrétienne*, and Vol. II *Reflexions sur l'Etude Comparée des Mysticismes*.

assuming a good deal more than the evidence will allow to suppose that this remarkable fit of abstraction from all external affairs, and the other shorter fits of abstraction to which Socrates was liable, had anything "mystical" about them. After all, Plato makes Alcibiades in the *Symposium* describe what happened at Potidaea very precisely, and what he describes has nothing mystical or trance-like about it, but is simply a remarkable piece of intellectual concentration. Socrates could not find the answer to a problem on which his mind was working, and went on thinking till he found it. There is no suggestion whatever that on this or any other occasion he became unconscious or was rapt into an ecstasy. The occurrence was an example of Socrates's utter indifference to the needs of the body and absolute concentration on the pursuit of truth. This is Plato's account, and if we are to accept it at all, we must accept it as it stands.

What the Potidaea episode does illustrate is that heroic intellectual discipline, that intense and unified concentration which is characteristic of Socrates as seen by Plato and which issues in that direct and vivid mental realization, that immediate intuition of a truth which for Socrates and Plato alone really deserved the name of knowledge in the fullest sense, the highest activity of the human mind, complete understanding (*νοήσις*). This intellectual discipline, this progressive unification and concentration of the mind is an important part of the preparatory ascesis, the work of purification which must be carried through before any approach towards the mystical union can be expected. With it must go a corresponding discipline, unification and direction of desire, of which we can find the Platonic form in the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*: and though the two together did not bring Socrates or Plato, as far as we can tell, anywhere near the mystical union or even the desire of it (for reasons which can be seen, but which it would be here irrelevant to discuss) they did enable them to lay a foundation on which their successors, and above all Plotinus, erected a metaphysic which has provided us with most valuable help to understanding what the mystical experience is.

It must be noted that this intuitive knowledge or intense concentrated realization of truths may extend to an obscure but very strong, still purely intellectual intuition of truth or being in general behind the appearances or particular truths, and that this may often be confused, by persons imperfectly informed, with real mystical experience. There are innumerable recorded experiences which would seem to fall into this category of an obscurely vivid intuition of universal being, one important group being those which used to be described as "nature-



mysticism", to which Wordsworth, Richard Jefferies and many others bear witness. Perhaps it is to a flash of intuition of this kind on a more purely intellectual level and more remote from sense-experience that we should attribute that strangely isolated passage about the Idea of the Good in Plato's *Republic* (506D-509B), where it is spoken of as the Sun of the realm of Forms and, though itself a Form, in some sense transcending the others and being the source of their reality and of knowledge of them: a passage which is of course of the greatest importance as one of the principal foundations of the later Platonists' "metaphysic of mysticism".

As to the half-millennium odd which separates Plato from Plotinus, I do not think that there is much chance of finding any trace of genuine mystical experience in the Academic or Platonic school in its various phases, or in the other philosophical schools of the period either. In the earlier part of the period there is a strong and genuine, but not at all mystical religion to be seen in the Stoic devotion to Divine Providence and in a very different way in the strange contemplative Deism of Epicurus: and it is possible, though by no means certain, that the Scepticism of Pyrrho may represent an incursion into the Western world of the predominantly negative mysticism of India, the pursuit of spiritual peace and freedom through utter detachment from and indifference to the illusory multiplicity of apparent being.\* I do not think, however, that it is possible to show any line of historical development between Pyrrhonian Scepticism and even the most negative side of Plotinus's thought and experience. The "negative theology" of the later Platonism seems, as far as we can tell, to have had a very different origin.†

In the latter part of the period, from the first century B.C. onwards there is an almost equally complete absence of any trace of genuine mystical experience, though the philosophical underworld of the period becomes increasingly pervaded with a fog of bewilderingly silly occultism and pseudo-mystical twaddle. There is, however, a development which is of great interest for our purpose, the steady building up of a metaphysic which does not only leave room for mysticism but seems to demand it as the crown of human experience of reality. It is significant that the work of building up the Middle Platonist or "Neo-Pythagorean" metaphysical systems was carried out by men who have no trace of mysticism in them and (at least till we come to Numenius) are not particularly interested, as far as we can tell, in religion.

\* Cf. E. Bréhier, *Histoire de la Philosophie*, I, II, pp. 370-4.

† Cf. E. R. Dodds, "The Parmenides of Plato and the Neo-Platonic One". (*Classical Quarterly*, Vol. XXII, 1928, 3, p. 129.)



This is, at least, certainly true of the group who hold the central and most important place in the development of Middle Platonism, the great second century Platonic scholar Gaius and his disciples, whose teaching is best represented for us by the *Didaskalikos* of Albinus.\* The long, complex, and of necessity imperfectly known development which leads up to the system expounded by Albinus and the not very dissimilar system which we find in the fragments of Numenius cannot be adequately discussed in one short section of an article, though I have tried to deal with it elsewhere.† All I shall do here is to indicate the main relevant features of the systems. At the head of their universe of reality stands a Supreme Principle who is at once the *Noûs-Θεός* the Mind-God of Aristotle‡ and the transcendent Idea of the Good of Plato.§ The transcendence of this Supreme Principle is strongly stressed, and Albinus at least uses in describing it that method of negation|| so much used by Plotinus and his successors. There is, however, no suggestion that the Supreme is utterly beyond the reach of reason and only to be reached in ecstasy. For the scholarly Platonists and for the Neo-Pythagoreans alike the First Principle, though it is "beyond being" is still *Noûs* and their whole manner of speaking of it clearly implies that it is not only Intellect itself but is attainable by the ordinary processes of rational thought. This is confirmed by most of the evidence of more popular writers. Maximus of Tyre, a professional rhetorician of the second century who found Platonic religion an excellent subject for his show-discourses and seems to have been quite well-read in the philosophy of his time and not altogether destitute of a fairly genuine philosophical-religious enthusiasm, has a good deal to tell us about the knowledge of God in his discourse "On the God of Plato".¶ He does not claim it as within his own experience, and hardly thinks it possible in this life; but it is a clear intellectual vision which he describes, Platonic *νοήσις* at its highest point, and not the darkness of the mystical union. There are passages in Celsus\*\* and in another Platonic rhetorician, the erratic genius Apuleius,†† in which they speak of the Supreme Good (in terms borrowed from the mysteries) as a sudden outbreak of light in the soul, which are susceptible at first sight of "mystical" interpretation. But, especially in view of our other evidence, there seems no reason

\* Cf. R. E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism*. (Cambridge Classical Studies, III.)

† Chaps. I and II of *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus*. (Cambridge Classical Studies, VI.)

‡ Albinus, *Didaskalikos*, ch. X. Numenius, *περὶ τὰ γενικά*, V, 30 (Thedinga).

§ Numenius, V, 25.

|| *Didaskalikos*, ch. X.

¶ 17, 9-12.

\*\* Cf. *Origen Contra Celsum*, 6, 3.

†† *De Deo Socratis*, III, 124.

to suppose that what these writers are talking about (probably again not from their own experience) is more than an exceptionally vivid and intense *voijrs* or intellectual intuition. (There are of course frequent pseudo-mystical and pathological states which produce the illusion of a moment of perfect clarity and universal understanding, a parody of Platonic intuition; they can be induced by drugs or epilepsy, and are common in circles where a second-rate and slightly bogus spirituality is cultivated, like that of these Platonic rhetoricians.)

Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, stands rather apart from the general thought of the age in this as in many other ways, and can really be said to have a doctrine of mystical ecstasy, perhaps based on genuine experience. He says, for example, in one passage of his endless allegorical commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures "When the intelligence shines all around us, pouring as it were a noonday beam into the whole soul, we are in ourselves and not possessed, but when it comes to set, naturally ecstasy and the divine possession and madness fall upon us. For when the divine light shines, the human light sets, and when the divine light sets, the human dawns and rises. . . . It is not lawful for mortal and immortal to dwell together."\* This emphasis on the "setting" or darkening of the human reason, and of the final vision of experience as a mysterious supra-rational possession by the divine, separates Philo clearly from the general Platonic tradition, though not altogether, as we shall see, from Plotinus. But Philo, after all, in spite of his extensive and rather confused philosophizing in the Greek manner, remains a devout Jew, and in so far as his mystical doctrine is not based on personal experience, it is the result of meditating on the inspiration of the Hebrew prophets† in the light of the traditional Greek doctrine of *ἐνθουσιασμός*, divine possession. The idea that *ἐνθουσιασμός* is of philosophical importance and can lead to a higher knowledge of reality is thoroughly Hellenic, as any reader of Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* will know. But in the Platonic tradition *ἐρῶς* and *ἐνθουσιασμός*, the divine passions and desires of the soul, are something within the personality rather than a possession by some transcendent supernatural being, and they are the driving force which impels the reason on its ascent to a clear vision of eternal truths and realities and their principle rather than a force impelling man to transcend reason in the mystical union. Here there is the clearest possible separation between the Judæo-Christian-Islamic tradition of mysticism and the Platonic

\**Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit*, 264-5.

†*De Ebriet*, 146-8; *De Gigant*, 44. E. Bréhier, *Idées Philosophiques et Religieuses de Philon*, pp. 174-96.

tradition, and here Plotinus occupies a middle position. There is, however, no demonstrable historical connexion between Plotinus and Philo. In intention and consciously Plotinus belongs fully to the Greek Platonic tradition, and to this we must now for a short space return.

From what has been said already it looks as if I was hardly justified in maintaining that the metaphysic of the Middle Platonists not only left room for mysticism but seemed to demand it. But I think there are certain features of Middle Platonism which, if examined a little more closely, will go some way towards justifying this contention. The first is the extreme stress laid on the transcendence of the Supreme Principle, the Good or Mind "beyond being" which seems to remove it in practice, if not altogether in theory, beyond the effective access of the human intellect, at any rate in this life. It must not be forgotten that the "negative theology", the description of the First Principle by negations rather than by affirmations, has already appeared in the Platonic tradition, though among the Platonists of the second century A.D. it does not seem to have been fully understood or its implications worked out.\* (In this, its earliest form, it is based on an interpretation of the second part of the "Parmenides" of Plato which the Neo-Platonists continue to follow, and which goes back at least to Moderatus, a Pythagorean of the first century A.D., and may go back much further.)† Then there is the very remarkable distinction made by both Albinus‡ and Numenius§ between the First Mind and a Second Mind, which latter is itself superior to the World-Soul, a distinction which, if it is to be given any coherent philosophical meaning at all, must lead to the conclusion that the Good or First Principle must transcend *Noûs* in any normal Platonic sense of the word as it transcends *oîdîa*. Middle Platonism, for all its immense importance in the history of European thought, is not a very coherent philosophy. But it points clearly forward to a system such as that of Plotinus in which the First Principle transcends the Platonic or Aristotelian *Noûs* and is beyond the reach of the ordinary processes of the human intellect.

This very sketchy and inadequate study of the Platonic tradition in so far as it concerns our subject, from Plato to Plotinus, does, I think, suggest one or two conclusions of general interest; first, that my contention at the beginning of the study was fully justified, namely that Plotinus is the only mystic among the pagan Platonists (with the doubtful exception of his intimate

\* Cf. Albinus, *Didaskalikos*, ch. X.

† Cf. E. R. Dodds, "The Parmenides of Plato and the Neo-Platonic One."

‡ *Didaskalikos*, i, c.

§ V, 25-30.

disciple Porphyry). This conclusion can, I think, be confirmed for the period after Plotinus by a study of the later Neo-Platonists, from Iamblichus onwards, whose thought attains its fullest expression in the colossal, rigid and elaborate theological system of Proclus. Admittedly they were not all addicted to the thoroughly anti-mystical practices of theurgy (the placing of the Divine Powers at the disposal of the operator by the magical manipulation of chains of occult influences linked through the universal sympathy), though they all regarded such practices with approval and treated the theurgists with great respect. But their stiff classifications, dividing the spiritual world into innumerable watertight compartments, leave little room for any mystical life. In the last of them, the sixth century Damascius, we find a general revulsion from the spirit and methods of Proclus, and a real mystical doctrine not far removed from that of Plotinus;\* but I do not think we have enough evidence to call Damascius himself a genuine mystic.

The second conclusion which I think we can proceed to draw is this. It has often been very forcibly argued, on purely rational and philosophical grounds, by defenders of the traditional theology† that a theology or religious philosophy cannot be erected on a foundation of religious, or even the highest mystical, experience, in the way which has been attempted by many modern theologians and religious philosophers. This contention, of the insufficiency of religious or mystical experience as a foundation for true thinking about God, is to some extent confirmed by the historical fact that, as far as I know, none of the great theological systems or religious philosophies of the world have professed to base their theology or philosophy on experience, but always either simply and solely on reason or on reasoning applied to a Divine revelation, generally presented in the form of an inspired scripture. The history of the Platonic religious philosophy illustrates this very strikingly. We have seen it develop up to the very threshold of Plotinus's system without any help from mystical experience at all, and with little sign of any strong religious experience among the people who contributed most to its development into a philosophy opening the way to mysticism. And Plotinus himself is very far from basing his doctrine of the One on his mystical experience. He presents it, as he presents all his philosophy, as based on the authority of Plato (whose Dialogues were by now regarded almost as inspired

\* Cf. especially his teaching about the ἀπορρητον, *Dubitaciones et Solutiones de Primis Principiis*, 2-8 (Ruelle). See also Bréhier's excellent account of the whole development of later Neo-Platonism, *Hist. : de la Philosophie*, I, II, pp. 472-84.

† E.g. M. C. d'Arcy, *The Nature of Belief*; E. L. Mascall, *He Who Is*, ch. III.

scriptures), but still more on hard honest rational discussion and purely intellectual insight into the nature of reality. Only the experience itself, he says, can show us what this ineffable experience is like,\* but he does not rely on experience to prove that there is such a principle as the One. Like all the greatest mystics, he interprets and judges his mysticism in the light of that doctrine about the supreme realities which he believes to be true on other grounds. The experience in itself, after all, remains incommunicable and unique, and cannot be made the foundation of a system. The mystic may not be able to doubt of its value, but he must find some other light of reason or revelation to show him its meaning.

The very close relationship of Plotinus's great hierarchy of the Three Hypostases, the One, *Noûs* (Spirit or Intellect) and Soul, to the triple hierarchies of the systems of his immediate predecessors, First Mind-God, Second Mind-God and Soul, is clear and generally recognized. It is, however, very interesting and important for the purposes of our study to note the striking differences between Plotinus's conception of the Supreme or First Principle and that generally held by Platonists in the age before him. The One for Plotinus is not *Noûs* any more than It is *oûria*. It transcends *Noûs* absolutely. In *Noûs* there is still duality, the duality of Eternal Thought and Object of Thought, the Divine Mind and the Platonic World of Forms,† and also the multiplicity-in-unity of the World of Forms itself. The One is pure and Absolute unity, the source of all plurality and therefore, says Plotinus, cannot be *όν* or *Noûs*, for both Being and Thought imply at least duality. But it is not this Neo-Pythagorean emphasis on unity, of which the origins can be traced in pre-Plotinian Hellenic philosophy,‡ to which I want to draw particular attention, but the way in which Plotinus presents the absolute transcendence of the One apart from Its absolute unity. *Noûs* is conceived by Plotinus entirely in the true Platonic tradition, as the summit of the natural hierarchy of being and knowledge. The purified mind of the philosopher attains to its supreme self-realization, the final development of its own powers by becoming *Noûs* and leaving the lower human world of Soul behind.§ Man at his best and highest is more than soul. He is *Noûs*. But the One of Plotinus is really out-

\* VI, 7, 34; VI, 9, 7.

† These had already been brought into relation by the Middle Platonists, who under Aristotle's influence were the first to make the Forms "thoughts of God". Cf. Albinus, *Didaskalikos*, ch. IX; *Numenius*, V, 25.

‡ Cf. Armstrong, op. cit., ch. II, *The One, Negative*, and Dodd's "The Parmenides of Plato and the Neo-Platonic One."

§ V, 3, 4; V, 8, 7.



side and beyond all hierarchy. It transcends our systematization and classification of the cosmos. It is "light above light".\* Not only is It the cause of Νοῦς and νοήματα and all else, but It sheds upon them an extra grace or glory other than the beauty of their proper natures, a χάρις ἐπιθέουσα τῷ κάλλει,† a most un-Platonic conception. We only attain to the One by leaving ourselves behind,‡ by a true ἐκστάσις, a going outside ourselves in a drunkenness, a rapture of love, when Νοῦς is no longer ἔμφρων but ἄφρων and its activity is no longer τὸ νοεῖν but τὸ μὴ νοεῖν ἀλλὰ ἄλλως ἐκείνὸν βλέπειν.§ Normally and in its natural state of τὸ νοεῖν, Νοῦς cannot see the One in Its primal unity, but only in a pluralized image, in the multiplicity of the Forms. This, incidentally, is not unlike the teaching of Philo about the soul's vision of God;|| and there is a whole tradition of Christian thought about the unknowability of God, probably deriving from Philo, very prominent in Origen and in the Greek theologians of the fourth century, and a subject of discussion for centuries afterwards, whose precise relationship to the thought of Plotinus requires more elucidation than it has yet received, though it is far too vast a task to undertake here.¶

This final self-transcendence and attainment to the mystical union with the One is sometimes, again as in Philo, represented as something "given", a free and mysterious appearing in us of the One, for which, when we have attained the highest possible state of purification and become Νοῦς we must wait passively and patiently.\*\* And this final union is a real union of the One and the Soul in most passages of the *Enneads* where it is spoken of, a union, that is, implying a real difference in the two united rather than a supreme self-realization and the consciousness of an eternally existing identity with the Absolute Self.†† And that it was for Plotinus a most positive and enriching experience, not a mere toppling over of the strained mind into unconsciousness and indefiniteness, I do not see how anyone who has read something of the *Enneads* with any real understanding can doubt. All this—the giving of what can only be called a supernatural character to the transcendence of the One and to the soul's union with it—brings Plotinus into very close affinity with the mystics of the Western tradition, with Christian Saints and Moslem Sufis, but it separates him very sharply from all the

\* V, 3, 12.

† VI, 7, 22.

‡ III, 8, 1; V, 4, 1.

§ VI, 7, 35. Cf. III, 8, 9; V, 3, 14.

|| *Quaestiones in Genesim*, IV, 8 (Aucher).

¶ Cf. Maréchal, op. cit.: Vol. II, pp. 91–141, for a most valuable sketch of the doctrine of Greek theologians and spiritual writers on this point.

\*\* V, 5, 8; V, 3, 17.

†† Cf. especially VI, 7, 34; also III, 8, ii; III, 9, 3; V, 8, ii, etc.



thinkers of the true Platonic tradition, in which the self-purified mind ascends through the closed order of the cosmos of eternal realities to the summit of intellectual contemplation, and finds there, if ever it should attain so far, a Supreme Principle which, however transcendent, still belongs to the realm of the intellect and the intelligible.

And yet Plotinus remains a passionately convinced Platonist. The passages which I have quoted from the *Enneads*, and the interpretation which I have given to his mysticism, could be flatly contradicted by other passages—perhaps fewer in number, but undoubtedly there and unmistakable in meaning—and by the interpretations of other much more renowned students of Plotinus. Plotinus, in fact, makes every possible effort to keep his doctrine of the One and the mystical union within Platonic bounds. There are passages where the union with the One is spoken of, not as the rare gift of union in love with the Transcendent and Wholly Other, but as the supreme self-realization; the philosopher becomes what he always was.\* It is on these passages, coupled with others in which the One is spoken of in strongly negative terms that Bréhier founds his theory of Indian influence on Plotinus, which makes him a mystic of Oriental rather than Western type; and Heinemann (with other German interpreters) also finds in Plotinus a negative and destructive mysticism which annihilates thought, consciousness and ordered reality and leaves only the formless negativity of the Infinite Self. I do not myself believe that this is a true interpretation of Plotinus's thought. It seems to me more likely that in these passages Plotinus is trying to bring his mystical doctrine within Platonic bounds, to make his mysticism, in Maréchal's words, "*une métaphysique vecue jusqu'au bout*".† In the same way on the ontological side, the scheme of necessary emanation of all things from the One, which is a most vital and important part of Plotinus's philosophy, binds the One firmly into place as the head of a Platonic cosmos. I once said, "The One is always getting inside the cosmos, becoming part of the system."‡ It would perhaps be truer to say that the One is always getting *outside* the cosmos, outside the tidy closed spiritual world which was the Hellenic philosopher's ideal, and that Plotinus is always struggling to bring It back again. It is this tension and antinomy between Plotinus's vision of the One as Absolute, beyond all hierarchy and only attainable in the mystical union and his con-

\* e.g. VI, 9, 11.

† Cf. Dodds, loc. cit., p. 142: "The Plotinian ecstasy . . . is achieved by a sustained intellectual effort from within . . . it is presented less as the abnegation of self-hood than the supreme self-realization."

‡ Armstrong, op. cit., p. 5.

ception of the One as head and supreme principle of the hierarchic cosmos of the Platonists, which led the later Neo-Platonists to postulate a super-One or Ineffable outside the cosmic hierarchy and distinct from the One which is the supreme principle of unity and order in the cosmic system. And it is this antinomy in his thought too which accounts for his vast and varied influence and for the very different effects he produces on different traditions and different types of mind.

I have suggested earlier in this article that Plotinus is the only Platonic mystic. Now from this further study it appears that there is a real opposition between his Platonism and at least one most important aspect of his mystical doctrine. This must not, however, be reduced to a crude opposition between reason and mystical experience. It was reason, an intellectual vision, intensified by experience no doubt, which led him to see that the Supreme Good and Truth lies beyond the point where reason stops, which conducted his mind to a Reality transcending the intelligible cosmic hierarchy. He could not know the One; those rare moments when It seemed to him to unite Itself with his soul in love were something other than knowledge; but he could know for certain that the One was there and had those transcendent attributes which he could never quite fit into the Platonic scheme.

Plotinus pursued the living truth with the most honesty and devotion of mind of any of the great Greek philosophers; and I think with more intellectual and spiritual humility than is suggested by Porphyry's biography, which makes him rather too much of the conventional Hellenic Sage and Superior Person. In the end he found a Reality the contemplation of which carried him beyond the bounds of that Platonic tradition to which he sought so devotedly to adhere. What that Reality was is a question which the readers of Plotinus must answer for themselves according to the faith and the reasons which they have. For myself, I have little doubt that Plotinus perceived however obscurely the Living Truth Whom he unknowingly sought, and, though here I realize the theological difficulties involved, was touched, however lightly, by some gift of His grace of supernatural contemplation. No other explanation, whether of inherited tradition or personal experience and development of thought, will, it seems to me, fit all the facts of Plotinus's doctrine of the One and the mystical union. The country of true mysticism is of course an extensive one, and the journey through it long and arduous. There is no conclusive evidence whatever to be derived from Plotinus's own and Porphyry's accounts of these true but transitory contacts with the One which can

suggest that Plotinus had travelled very far in it. Certainly he was a long way from that transforming union of which I spoke earlier. All that I can feel certain of is that he had crossed the frontier which separates the purely intellectual contemplation of the Platonists from mystical experience properly so called. His unique privilege of being the one true pagan mystic may correspond to his unique and providential position as the one pagan philosopher who more deeply and beneficially than any other influenced the development of Christian dogmatic and mystical theology.

A. H. ARMSTRONG.

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## THE MIND OF SOPHOCLES

"A GREAT book is a great evil," wrote Callimachus: perhaps his twenty years as librarian of the great library at Alexandria had sickened him of dusty manuscripts; but he lived in an age that was much like our own, among other things in the fact that the poetry of ancient Greece had become encrusted with comments and scholia whose lengthy and frequently improbable explanations of the text served to obscure rather than illuminate the genius of the author. When Tom Brown went to Rugby or Jan Ridd to Blundell's, it was Homer and Horace they studied and, for the most part, learned to love: but since their days the classics have been through the age of the Higher Criticism, and have emerged encased in massive volumes in which but a few lines of text on each page are accompanied by four or five times as much comment, explanation, and criticism. Such a state of affairs has not added to their popularity; the Athenian audience who could listen with enjoyment to some twelve plays in succession during a single festival would have had no use for them encumbered with their modern paraphernalia. Catullus, scribbling off his lampoons and love poems to his friends, would never have believed that one day a whole volume would be published of "emendations and elucidations" of what he had written; while Horace, reclining in the shade of his farm with a jar of old Falernian at his elbow, would have been amused to learn that, two thousand years afterwards, an editor of his poems should complain that his publishers would only allow him "slightly more than two pages of notes to

one of text", adding naïvely that "the charm of a note often lies in that part which is least strictly relevant, and comment is often most interesting when most discursive".

Sophocles, perhaps, has suffered more than any ancient author from this fate. In the standard edition of his works, to be found, one imagines, on the shelves of every library in the civilized world worthy of the name, we are faced in each of the seven volumes with an introduction of some seventy pages before we arrive at the series of summaries of the plot which preface the actual text: even when the text begins, each page is more than two-thirds of notes and textual criticism; and there follows another forty pages of appendices and indices; while the text itself is interrupted by frequent asterisks and other signs. It is little wonder that fewer and fewer are able to feel for him the admiration which he aroused not only in the ancient world but in our own, up to the end of the last century. Yet the situation has, in some quarters, been recognized; for many years the Loeb classics have been giving, to English students at least, a means of acquiring the culture of ancient Greece and Rome with a minimum of footnote and comment; by printing a "standard" text with a translation facing it they tell us what, in fact, we want to know—what Sophocles said, and what it means in English; such points as need explanation being briefly explained in footnotes which do not average more than one a page. By this means it is possible to get some conception of each tragedy as a whole, to notice the change in Oedipus as the events unfold themselves, to appreciate the swiftness of the action in the *Antigone*, to feel in each tragedy the author's mastery of his art without the beginning of a play being separated from the end by a multitude of things which Sophocles never wrote.

Yet, by itself, the Loeb is not enough. We are not Greeks, and there are problems in every Greek play to which we cannot readily see the answer. How can we be expected to sympathize with, or even understand, the conduct of a woman who murders her own children by way of revenging herself on her husband who has deserted her? What is the meaning of a play in which a god is depicted, in poetry of incredible beauty, leading a band of women to commit murder in the course of some mountain revels? How can we think of Oedipus as having deserved a fate which was decreed for him before he was born? Or why should Antigone be justified in facing death for the sake of a small point of religious ritual? To understand these things, we must know what reactions the Greeks felt when these problems were first put before them; and during the last six years a series of books have been published which have gone a long way to giving

us the answers. *Greek Tragedy: a Literary Study*,\* by H. D. F. Kitto, is a convenient starting point; published in 1939, it sets out to explain "by reference to the communal life of which the poets were a part" the meaning of their plays; yet a little later the author states that he only professes to deal with "what is in the poet's head, without inquiring how it got there", and his whole concept of tragedy is of an art "moral and intellectual", somewhat loosely connected with real life. It is, indeed, on this very point that Dr. Grube opened his *Drama of Euripides*† two years later: "How far," he asks at the outset, "should works of art reflect the changing pattern of contemporary life?" The answer he gives is that "Euripides was a realist, and he made drama real because he made it true to life as he saw it." And he adds, "He saw it very acutely from every side, omitting none." It is Euripides's own answer in the *Frogs*,

I showed them scenes of common life,  
the things we know and see,‡

as it is Shakespeare's in *Hamlet*:

. . . the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

This realist and historical approach to Greek Tragedy was continued two years later by Victor Ehrenberg's *People of Aristophanes*.§ Though dealing primarily with the background of comedy, it turned a searchlight on the everyday life of fifth-century Athens: farmers and slaves, nobles and peasants, traders, metics, craftsmen, soldiers, market-women, villains and knaves, Cleon, Nicias, Alcibiades, the Sophists, a whole gallery of minor politicians known and unknown are brought to life again; even the three tragedians are resurrected for our benefit. Nor are the characters dumb; we hear a farmer's and a woman's view of the war, two views of the new education, of Euripides, and of Aeschylus; criticisms of the jury system, of the new politicians, of King Sitalces, of the Great King and his Court, of oracle-mongers and sycophants. All this is of immense value when we turn to the interpretation of tragedy. Some of Euripides's characters can almost be matched from Aristophanes—the pompous Pentheus of the *Bacchae*, for instance, or the self-righteous Jason of the *Medea*, with the Lamachus of the *Acharnians*; and they throw a great deal of light on the Athenian outlook on life, and enable us to guess their reaction to some of the problems of tragedy mentioned above. To take the *Medea* as an example:

\* Methuen, 1939.

† Methuen, 1941.

‡ *Frogs*, 959.

§ Blackwell, 1943.

the note that is stressed from the very first line of the play is that Medea is a foreign woman,

Would God no Argo e'er had winged the seas  
To Colchis . . .\*

a note that is echoed by Medea in her first speech:

Sure, far-comers anywhere,  
I know, must bow them and be gentle,†

and emphasized by Jason:

Howbeit, thou hast got  
Far more than given. A good Greek land has been  
Thy home, not barbarity.‡

Now we know from Aristophanes what was the typical Athenian attitude to foreigners; it was an attitude of cynical scorn, especially for foreign dignitaries, very much like the ordinary Englishman's attitude when confronted with a Fascist or Nazi dignitary in full uniform. Dicaeopolis' comment when the Persian Ambassadors are brought into the Assembly—"O Ecbatana! What a costume!"§—is reminiscent of the remark of the B.B.C. commentator on the Berlin Olympic Games, which was to the effect that "everyone here seems to be wearing some sort of a uniform. They look pretty gorgeous, most of them." It was with this scorn, then, that Medea was received in Greece, and which, above all things, she could not bear; and when she has decided that she has not the courage to kill her children, it is the thought of being laughed at that drives her to do it:

Would I be a thing  
Mocked at, and leave my enemies to jeer  
Unchecked.

And again, a few lines later:

They shall not take my little ones alive  
To make their mock with.||

There are other problems, too, in Greek tragedy which can only be understood by a knowledge of Greek—and especially Athenian—mentality.

The latest contribution to this series is, to date, the most important.¶ Sophocles lived the active life of an Athenian citizen. He was, on more than one occasion, a member of the board of generals; he came of a good family, and he must have seen all sides of life at Athens. It is, therefore, essential that we

\* *Medea*, I.

† *Ibid.*, 222-3.

‡ *Ibid.*, 534-6.

§ *Acharnians*.

|| *Medea*, 1049: 1061.

¶ *Sophoclean Tragedy*, by C. M. Bowra. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1944.



should understand his tragedies against the background of the age in which they were written. "We can no longer," writes Dr. Bowra, "isolate the works of Greek poetry in a sphere of pure and timeless art. It is the business of scholarship to recapture something of what they meant to those for whom they were written." But, almost at once, we are up against a difficulty. Athens was a small city by modern standards; yet there were as many different opinions then as now on each important topic. The religious views of Sophocles were not those of Euripides or Anaxagoras, nor were theirs those of Socrates: the political views of Thucydides differed from those of Xenophon or the "Old Oligarch"—indeed, the only point on which they seem to agree is a distrust of any complete form of democracy, a point of view which would not have been held by the majority of the citizens. There were, in fact, probably as many different views among the audience at a tragic performance as there are among the authors whose works have come down to us. How, then, are we to judge the audience's reaction to a given problem?

The answer is that, as Sophocles well knew, different people in the audience would react in a different way. When Oedipus in the *Oedipus Coloneus* says

Dear son of Aegeus, to the gods alone  
There comes not death nor age . . .\*

the majority of his hearers would have agreed with him, as would Homer, Archilochus, Mimnermus, and the majority of Greek writers; but there would be others who would say with Pindar:

But ever in sunlight, night and day, the good receive an unlaborious life;  
neither with violent hand vex they the earth nor the waters of the sea, in that  
new world; but with the honoured of the gods they possess a tearless life†;

in other words, the members of Orphic or Pythagorean brotherhoods, who, in this as in so much else, so nearly re-echoed the Christian sentiment:

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no  
more. Nor mourning nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more; for the  
former things are passed away,‡

while others, too, would have held the belief later to be formulated by Euripides:

Who knows if life be death, and death on earth  
Be reckoned life by those below.§

We must be prepared, then, to find in a Greek audience many

\* O.C., 607-8.

‡ *Apor.*, xxi, 4.

† *Olympians*, II, 62-8. Trans. Myers.

§ *Frogs*.

different attitudes to most of the problems that emerged from their tragic performances. The question may, indeed, be asked whether there were any spheres in which Greek opinion would have been more or less united. Dr. Bowra gives four—law, religion, ethics, and the outlook of certain writers; yet it is possible to show that Greek opinion differed very widely on at least two of these points. To take religion first: there were, as has been indicated above, three great trends of opinion in fifth-century Greek religion: undoubtedly the orthodox were numerically the stronger; but how many of them, in the cultured and critical age in which they lived, could have felt any sincere belief in the hideous perversions of the Olympic polytheism? Even Pindar, whom Dr. Bowra quotes as the mouthpiece of orthodoxy, asks to be excused from calling any of the gods a cannibal, though the story of the House of Pelops forces him to do so. Secondly, there was the “underground” movement of Orphism, and there is the same difficulty in assessing its influence that attends the discussion of all such movements. The *disciplina arcani* of the Orphics was very strict; “Not all things are to be told to all men” has been handed down to us as a saying of Pythagoras himself. Herodotus, usually the most garrulous of historians, becomes unusually mysterious when speaking of the Orphics, and contents himself with a dark hint that he knows the names of many prominent members of the sect in his day, but will not reveal them. Plato constantly refers to them without using the actual name. Yet all the great writers—Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, in addition to those mentioned above—knew their doctrines; and it is at least probable that in the religious thought of the day they were far more influential than the orthodox. Thirdly, there was a large body of disbelievers: if we take the *Funeral Speech* as reflecting the sentiments of its hearers, we should reach the conclusion that the Athenian citizen in general had little use for the gods in their everyday lives; for, in spite of the religious nature of the proceedings, no reference whatever is made to them in the whole speech. Even the annual sacrifices are only mentioned as providing the citizens with mental relaxation. What uniformity, too, could be found on ethical questions? When, as Xenophanes observed, all the vices had been ascribed to the gods, there was little likelihood of their followers trying to do better. Dr. Bowra quotes Plato and Aristotle as evidence of a homogeneous ethical outlook among the Greeks: but Aristophanes was nearer to life than they were, and from his evidence we cannot believe that anything beyond mere expediency was the basis on which their ethics were founded: and what is expedient at one time is not

expedient at another. Thucydides states as much when describing the effect of the Plague on the morals of the citizens.

It is, therefore, necessary to interpret Sophocles through history; and it is not always easy to do so with accuracy. Yet the poets of Greece were also the moral teachers—indeed, the Sophist Protagoras, in Plato's dialogue named after him, asserts with some truth that all the poets were really Sophists, but did not dare to use the name because of the jealousy which they felt it was bound to cause. It is a feature of Greek epic and dramatic poetry that it deals with the fortunes of individuals against a background of universal truths. Where, then, in Sophocles are these truths to be found? Aeschylus used his choruses to act as his mouthpiece, to "give in superb and noble commentary the universal truths set out in the particular action". In Euripides it is rather the characters who present his ideas—Ion, for instance, gives his feeling for the poetry of religion, Creusa his hatred of the cruelty of the Olympian theology; Jason his distrust of women who are too clever, Medea his admiration for the unspectacular share they have in Greek life. But Sophocles used neither of these means of expression; it is, instead, in his plots as a whole and their working out that we can find the lesson he wishes us to learn. In some plays this lesson is self-evident—the *Antigone*, for instance, is the classic portrayal of the nobility of following the laws of God rather than the laws of man; but in other plays the lesson lies rather more beneath the surface, and for us who are separated by more than two thousand years from their author it is sometimes in danger of being lost altogether. Dr. Bowra, however, points out that with a little care we can easily read the signposts that Sophocles has set to mark our way. In five of his plays there is a final song by the Chorus—not to tell us what to think, but to confirm the feelings which the actions of the characters and the working out of the plot have already produced in us. In the *Antigone* there is the song which includes the lines:

Reverence towards the gods must be inviolate.  
Great words of proud men are ever  
punished with great sorrows.

We have seen Creon defy the laws of God, repent too late, and suffer the loss by sudden and violent death of his son, his wife, and Antigone. In two other plays there is a divinity whose words perform the same function, and in the *Ajax* and the *Oedipus Coloneus* an impartial summing-up is given by a human character. If a teacher is to be judged by the fact that his lessons can be understood by those whom he is teaching, Sophocles must rank high among the teachers of ancient Greece.

The most important part of Dr. Bowra's book is the last chapter, in which he analyses the doctrine which Sophocles preached. He begins by attacking the old view that Sophocles was interested in nothing but plot and character, that he cared nothing for the religious, ethical, or metaphysical problems which his plays might suggest. This view is still to be found in such a standard work as the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, where, in the article on Sophocles, it is stated that "Sophocles is no philosopher or speculator on the deeper problems of life . . . in the course of his tragedies man's will plays a greater, that of the gods a lesser, part than in those of Aeschylus". Like other half-truths, this is completely misleading. Shakespeare's tragedies are human tragedies in the sense that the agencies that cause the tragedies are human agencies; even the Ghost in *Hamlet* and the Witches in *Macbeth* only affect the tragedy by appealing to the suspicions which have already taken possession of Hamlet, and the ambitions of Macbeth and his wife. The fault is not in men's stars but in themselves. With Sophocles it is different; it is, as has been suggested above, impossible to understand his plays except against the religious background of the fifth century at Athens, for they are religious in a sense that Shakespeare's are not. The great doctrine they set forth is that of the relations between gods and men: "The field of their action is not political or national or even domestic; it is the single reality to which both gods and men belong."\*

Having established this point, we can proceed to analyse the content of his plays in the light of it. Aristotle, possibly with the plays of Sophocles in mind, attaches special importance to two elements in the plot: Reversal, i.e. a change of fortune, whether from good to bad or bad to good; and Discovery, "a change from ignorance to knowledge, and thus to either love or hate, in the personages marked for good or evil fortune".† In the Sophoclean sense these terms have a far deeper significance than Aristotle's definitions seem to suggest. Creon, Heracles, and Oedipus pass from prosperity to misery, while Electra, Philoctetes, and the old Oedipus pass from misery to something which might be called prosperity. This is Reversal in every sense, and in each case it is preceded by a Discovery—not the Discovery by one person of another (two such occur in the extant plays of Sophocles, but they are only a leading up to the real Discovery), but the Discovery by a character of some vital truth about himself. Oedipus discovers who he is, and his fall is the consequence; Ajax discovers he has been mad, and resolves to kill himself from the shame he feels at what he has done in his

\* P. 360.

† Poet, 1452a.

madness; Deianira's life is ruined with her realization of her hideous mistake. Each play has its Discovery and consequent Reversal; and, although the knowledge discovered by the characters is about themselves, it is primarily about themselves in relation to the gods. *Initium sapientiae timor Domini*. "Know thyself," says Socrates in the *Charmides*, "is the same thing as 'Be humble.'"<sup>\*</sup> Man's first lesson is to learn his insignificance before the gods. Moreover, he must learn it through suffering, and the plays of Sophocles show the process and the means by which he learns it. To realize the power with which he preached his doctrine, we have but to compare the confident and bullying tone of Creon at the beginning of the *Antigone* with the state of despair to which he is reduced when told of the death of Eurydice at the end of it:

To none else can they lay  
This guilt, but to me.  
Yes, I was the slayer, I say it,  
Unhappy, of thee.<sup>†</sup>

It is this realization which brings a sense of peace and relief at the end of each tragedy. Shakespearian tragedy ends with the death of the central figure; in Sophocles it ends with that figure realizing what he truly is. Oedipus, Ajax, Creon, Deianira have all made their peace with the gods before the end comes; for they acted for the most part in ignorance, and are entitled to compassion and understanding.

Few writers in England have had the ability to pass on the inspiration of the classics as Dr. Bowra has. His *Ancient Greek Literature and Tradition and Design in the Iliad* have already shown him as an almost unequalled exponent of the literature of the ancient world. In this, his last volume, he has shown that learning has no need to imply dullness, and that the meaning of an ancient author cannot be brought out without a deep appreciation of the age in which he lived and wrote.

DOM DENIS AGIUS.

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<sup>\*</sup> Plato: *Charm.*, 164E.

<sup>†</sup> *Antigone*: 1316-20.



## THE LATER POETRY OF T. S. ELIOT\*

MR. ELIOT'S last four long poems, which have now been published in a single volume, are probably easier to read than they were to write. For Mr. Eliot, choosing the stony path, is trying to utter the inexpressible. He does not find the description of the spiritual life any easier than St. John of the Cross found it in the sixteenth century or Dame Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth. For this is what these poems are about. The poet here is not a mystic; he is rather a man patiently laying the foundations from which a genuine mystical experience may spring. Indeed, Mr. Eliot would probably put it more simply. He would say that he is a man trying to save his soul, and claim that task as a legitimate theme for poetry.

We do not dispute the claim. There is nothing that poetry cannot articulate. But it may be profitable to point out that some things are easier to say than others, and that the poet cannot run ahead of his experience. If he does, he ceases to write good poetry, because he thereby ceases to be himself. Mr. Eliot has never done this; and his refusal has given him a rare integrity among religious poets. But his scrupulous regard for truth—the truth of his personal experience and the truth of his impersonal quest—places him at a momentary disadvantage. The first may be meagre and the second may be mysterious; and therefore the material out of which a poem is built up may be insufficient for the grand design. Never mind, Mr. Eliot will say; this is still a "waste land", and we must build how and where we can.

That is one difficulty; and it is, I think, especially appropriate to Mr. Eliot. Words have always come to him easily, but the critic in him has resisted their appeal. He has sifted and weighed and tested them, and in the end subjected them to the poet's final decree; whether, at this moment, a poem shall be made at all. With Mr. Eliot, I always suspect a general decision that every poem shall remain unwritten, unless good reason can be shown to the contrary. Nor do I quarrel with this selective discipline; poetry stands or falls by other tests. I only suggest that in the making of these poems now under review, the poet's self and the poet's subject were both inhibiting factors; and that the triumph of the poems is something like the triumph of Beethoven's last quartets. That is to say, it is the triumph of the artist's mind over the artist's matter.

The very title of the present volume justifies the musical

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\**Four Quartets*. (Faber & Faber.)

analogy, and confirms the feeling that Mr. Eliot is straining at the boundaries of poetry. A parallel with Hopkins suggests itself; but the parallel is also a contrast. Hopkins sometimes seemed to tear the English language to tatters in order to articulate his thought or his passion more precisely. Mr. Eliot, on the other hand, withdraws altogether from the fray, and resigns himself to failure, where Hopkins would have gone down, all his guns blazing, to defeat.

That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory,  
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,  
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle  
With words and meanings. The poetry does not matter.

It is the general strength, and the occasional weakness of *Four Quartets*, that the poetry does not matter. Like all good poets, Mr. Eliot knows that the pearl beyond price is also beyond poetry, and that, although it may be seen, it may not be captured by the imagination. The lines quoted above follow a splendid passage in rhyme which describes the pitiless march of the seasons, with their inexorable succession of birth, maturity and death.

What is the late November doing  
With the disturbance of the spring  
And creatures of the summer heat,  
And snowdrops writhing under feet  
And hollyhocks that aim too high  
Red into grey and tumble down  
Late roses filled with early snows?

But these images are not good enough for Mr. Eliot. Either, he will say, I must express this thing by analogy, which is the way of the poet; or by abstraction, which is the way of the philosopher; or by a marriage of the two, which is the most difficult way of all, and is the way of the great masters. Each of the *Quartets* is built up on these three modes of expression. In each the poet proceeds from his particular self to the universal truth he is pursuing. In each the truth leads him back, through the Cloud of Unknowing, to a local habitation and a name.

In my end is my beginning.

And the beginning was East Coker, a village in Dorset where the Eliots were already living in the Middle Ages:

Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter  
Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes  
Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth  
Mirth of those long since under earth  
Nourishing the corn.

The beginning was the Dry Salvages, or *Les Trois Sauvages*, three rocks off the coast of New Hampshire, the continent of adoption:

And the ragged rock in the restless waters,  
Waves wash over it, fogs conceal it;  
On a halcyon day it is merely a monument,  
In navigable weather it is always a seamark  
To lay a course by: but in the sombre season  
Or the sudden fury, is what it always was.

And the beginning was Nicholas Ferrar's house at Little Gidding, deep in the placid English landscape where the poet has found himself most thoroughly.

So, while the light fails  
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel  
History is now and England.

These poems describe a circle, and their plan is much more apparent when you read them one after the other. The same images recur, like the leading melodies of a Quartet in music; the children's voices in the shrubbery, the rose leaves, the jaws of the sea. The images illustrate the abstractions, but this would not be enough if the two were not fused, inseparably, in a poetic statement. It is worth looking a little more closely to see how this marriage is brought about.

The poems, as we have already suggested, are concerned with the making of poetry and with the salvation of the soul, and with the subservience of the first task to the second. They are concerned with a particular poet in a particular time and place. Their premises are frankly personal. The poet walks with the shade of Dante, not in mediaeval or in modern Florence, but in the London "blitz".

After the dark dove with the flickering tongue  
Had passed beyond the horizon of his homing

and his spectral guest

Faded on the blowing of the horn.

This last line might well stand as an example of poetic ambiguity. The context makes it quite obvious that Mr. Eliot is referring to the "All Clear", but the word "horn" opens up the perspectives of time. What he had been discussing with the Italian master was the use of words. He poses the problem quite prosaically, and even more personally, in "East Coker":

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—  
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of "l'entre deux guerres"

(note that "entre deux guerres" which might elsewhere be condemned as an affectation is here justified as an assonance).

Trying to learn to use new words, and every attempt  
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure  
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words  
For the thing one no longer has to say.

The task can only be accomplished "by strength and submission",  
and has only been fulfilled:

Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope  
To emulate.

For Mr. Eliot, in "East Coker", "there is only the trying"; but  
when he speaks with Dante in "Little Gidding" he is shown the  
way of the Divine Comedy. For Dante the problems of speech  
and the problems of the spirit are one. For himself he found

words I never thought to speak  
In streets I never thought I should revisit  
When I left my body on a distant shore

Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us  
To purify the dialect of the tribe

he goes on to warn the modern poet of the disillusionments and  
the irritations of age. The *saeva indignatio* of Swift is here added  
to his own astringency and there is no further word about the  
literary problem. Also—and this is very significant—there is no  
further word about it in Mr. Eliot's poem. Mr. Eliot, in fact,  
has been barking up the wrong tree. There is nothing in the  
future for him but a growing and embittered exasperation with  
the follies of mankind, nothing but the cankered pride which  
does, indeed, dog the pages of the Divine Comedy,

unless restored by that refining fire  
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.

In plain words, there is, for the poet as for the ordinary run of  
men, no Paradise without Purgatory; and the dancers who "all  
went under the hill" in "East Coker" are now dancing to a  
different and more deliberate tune. This is the whole point of  
the poem, and it is very significant that a poet should have drawn  
Mr. Eliot's attention to it.

The point is reinforced, heavily, elsewhere. The purifying  
flames flicker through all the *Four Quartets*. The roses of Burnt  
Norton follow the poet's soul into the necessary darkness:

Ash on an old man's sleeve  
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.

The fine wainscoting at East Coker is linked with the Caroline frame of Little Gidding, and neither remains any longer in the loved landscape to excite the satisfaction of the eyes.

Dust in the air suspended  
Marks the place where a story ended  
Dust inbreathed was a house—  
The wall, the wainscot and the mouse.

The conscious quotations from St. John of the Cross:

In order to arrive at what you did not know  
You must go by the way which is the way of ignorance.  
In order to possess what you do not possess  
You must go by the way of dispossession

are turned into Mr. Eliot's own currency; but there is no inflation.

The wounded surgeon plies the steel  
That questions the distempered part;  
Beneath the bleeding hands we feel  
The sharp compassion of the healer's art  
Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.

The poet must undergo the dual ordeal of fire and water to achieve the nudity of the spirit; these are the classical symbols of purgation, the primal elements which survive the desecration of nature and the degradation of man.

Water and fire succeed  
The town, the pasture and the weed.  
Water and fire deride  
The sacrifice that we denied.  
Water and fire shall rot  
The marred foundations we forgot  
Of sanctuary and choir  
This is the death of water and fire.

If this were the limit of Mr. Eliot's vision, he would have told us nothing that, in essence, we did not know before. Already, in "Ash Wednesday", he had trod these Lenten measures, and as we watched him we may have been conscious of an absence; a spiritual, even a theological incompleteness. It was remarkable that the negative way could produce such positive poetry, but we may still have felt the want of joy. We may still have wished, in spite of the poet's rhetorical question, that the "aged eagle" would spread his wings. We may have wondered if Mr. Eliot



saw the difference between the brooding and the contemplative spirit; and have turned for comparison to a great modern poet whom Mr. Eliot does not admire—Paul Claudel. Nowhere in modern literature are the feelings of nature so crucified as in the drama of Claudel, but out of suffering there is born a creative, a liberating joy. And although Mr. Eliot's *Four Quartets* are still chiefly concerned with the disciplines and deprivations of the purgative way, they are finally significant for a further reason which only declares itself towards the end of "Little Gidding". The fire that died with the corruption and the mediocrity it consumed is rekindled; or rather the poet's eyes are opened at last to the Reason behind the corrosive flame. I am inclined to think that the moment of this discovery is the highest point yet touched by Mr. Eliot's poetry. Something is liberated here, an impulse no less than a recognition, which releases the best lyric he has ever written; a lyric which is as free in its movement as it is compressed in its thought and classical in its temper and design.

The dove descending breaks the air  
 With flame of incandescent terror  
 Of which the tongues declare  
 The one discharge from sin and error.  
 The only hope, or else despair  
 Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—  
 To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.  
 Love is the unfamiliar Name  
 Behind the hands that wove  
 The intolerable shirt of flame  
 Which human power cannot remove.  
 We only live, only suspire  
 Consumed by either fire or fire.

The whole of the spiritual life—Pentecost and Purgatory and the hint of Paradise—are in these lines; and so clearly, so densely, that we ask ourselves what they can mean to those readers who do not admit the categories of contemplation. Nevertheless, they sound—metrically as well as mystically—a new note, and they excite a profound curiosity as to what kind of poetry Mr. Eliot will be writing in the future.

The other theme treated in *Four Quartets* is the mystery of Time, and it is much more difficult to analyse. The subject does not yield the same rich poetic fruit as the soul's pilgrimage and purgation. It is a more philosophical, and a less dramatic, subject. Nevertheless it finds its equation in Mr. Eliot's imagery and metaphor; and it is the fixed point to which the movement of the poem refers. This movement is always between the soul

created in time, but also in eternity, and the Maker who exists in a timeless dimension which neither poet nor philosopher can understand. Time, Mr. Eliot realizes, is not merely history and the here-and-now and the hereafter. It is the relation between all three.

We had the experience but missed the meaning,  
And approach to the meaning restores the experience  
In a different form.

And yet, at other times, the varieties of experience all seem to compose a single pattern and a reiterated tune.

There is no end yet, the voiceless wailing,  
No end to the withering of withered flowers,  
To the movement of pain that is painless and motionless,  
To the drift of the sea and the drifting wreckage,  
The bone's prayer to Death its God. Only the hardly, barely prayable  
Prayer of the one Annunciation.

One has to listen for Mr. Eliot's meaning rather than look for it. It lies, not in the crabbed, cerebral abstractions which are only justified, I think, as a subordinated mode of expression enhancing the more musical and metaphorical statement of the same ideas, but in the very texture and melody of his verse. It has to be caught like a sunbeam, not grasped like a plan. The meaning of the *Four Quartets* is never confused and never wilfully obscure. But it is always mysterious and often inconsecutive; it is only when you have the same notes repeated and developed throughout the four poems that the harmony of the whole declares itself to the receptive spirit rather than the ratiocinative mind. The sea in "The Three Salvages" is the instrument of time, and of the disasters which punctuate it. It is the means by which men travel to their beatitude or their doom. The ground-swell of which the poet speaks "that is and was from the beginning", is echoed in the intricate verses I have quoted above, and we learn much about the mystery of time and fate by listening to it.

Mr. Eliot's *Four Quartets* remain the only major work of poetry to be produced in England during the war. A period of political obsession has passed him by and finds no direct reflection in these deeply considered and profoundly experienced verses. The trumpets and the shouting have driven him into that innermost room where a man is alone with God. And for that very reason, the poems are a relevant rebuke to our shallow and conceited humanism. They are a recall to the things that matter. The poet, of all men, has the right to this detachment. In other

contexts Mr. Eliot has shown himself aware of our crisis and a wise contributor to its solution. But here he utters a warning which would be unpopular were it not so magnificently uttered; and in so doing puts his finger on the prime political problem of this or any other time—the illness of the individual soul. It is not always easy for the moralist to please with his artistry at the same moment as he dismays with his message. If these verses were less finely wrought, they would depress rather than exalt. As it is, they prove the divorce between poetry and politics; no crisis and no conscription can sever the poet and the contemplative from the life “whose fountains are within”. It is a piquant reflection that when all our White Papers and Political Testaments are mouldering in the dust of our Public Libraries, these poems, so lonely and so imaginative, will remain.

ROBERT SPEAIGHT.

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## INVOCATION TO THE STARS AT THE MOUTH OF THE TAGUS

Rain down, stars, upon the sea, drown in the deep wave your  
light,  
plunge roots from heaven now in the salt tide  
to flower now from the sea's bed, here, in a sudden growth,  
or spring to blossom in a later day and newer light,  
and on some other night, my mind in some other place  
shall feel fruition of this night's star sowing.  
Some day, some night, unknown now, this now then unremem-  
bered  
but not unfruitful (life counts no loss when all is known),  
harvest the present stars and with them light  
the innumerable nights that lie before;  
for all our nights are one, all our desires the same:  
the solitary spirit's growth, that in the darkness turns  
seeking some root of pity in the things that are,  
some root pressed down from heaven into the infinite sea  
by the uncounted stars: one sea, one star; one spirit, one desire;  
this is the pain and beauty of life in a strange and beautiful place  
where there is solitude for one to grow to the measure of all,  
a place apart from men wherein to learn their worth,  
rehearse the worship of brave, of beautiful, of good.

Here in this place, this city set on hills by river and by sea,  
 is spread man's life, and all his lambent dreams  
 pass on the warm gold air before my eyes,  
 one with his visions everywhere, visions that float  
 where God has granted loveliness of scene;  
 and here, at this edge of the antique world,  
 upon the edge of legend, poised between north and south and  
 east and west,  
 to the west Brazil and to the east Bombay, Antwerp to north and  
 Africa to south,  
 Lisbon sends out upon her seas her sons and draws them back,  
 their grave eyes clouded with the mist of dreams  
 that men have dreamed, the air is thick with dreams across the  
 seas.

Here let me gaze on dreams, and let me see  
 the secret of man's spirit and his heart.  
 Oh! that we knew the subtle path that leads  
 from lovers' eyes that shine, up to the cold stars that light the sky,  
 not from our earthly glow but from heaven beyond;  
 if we could map that path and tread secure  
 that our love was holy and the heart was God's,  
 then might we read the enigma of our dreams  
 and feed the spirit's growth on these flowers of its night.

Gardens of Lisbon hang upon the air and crown with their  
 floating leaves my head,  
 silent I watch the fall of a leaf and with tender touch I gaze,  
 as the soft wind that bears it down caresses the taut skin  
 that gives me the knowledge of things yet keeps us apart;  
 so too it bears the boat that sails to the coast mist  
 as for one slow minute it floats past the end of a street,  
 caught up into the eternal in the infinite perspective of sea and  
 sky;  
 and I mirror both leaf and sail, and time and eternity touch.

Float on the lake in the park the swans and from the bank  
 the gardener plays his hose and waters their white wings,  
 a young man passing pauses to smile and watch  
 the white ideal thus caught in the mesh of the real,  
 but an old man stays, withered, in pain, to throw them bread;  
 I sit on the bench and reflect them all—gardener, man and youth,  
 swanlike I seek the inverted sky to contain my more than all.

High over the reasoned streets that Pombal drew,  
 a garden of broken stones hangs gentle and grey,

shattered by Voltaire's earthquake, and now, still  
 mingling confused its fragments of ruined past  
 which yet by its very disorder yields meaning to the mind;  
 here as I look upon these tumbled stones  
 that once recalled to this western rock Mount Carmel's mystery,  
 what endless vista of life rings outward from Hermes and a coil  
 of rope!

Into these scented gardens of flowers and stones  
 comes from the streets the farmers' shout to wake  
 from its long dream of dreams the enchanted mind,  
 the market carts come in at three and all night long;  
 earth and the peasant feed this beauty here: on them must rest  
 the dreams that reach the stars, join heaven and earth;  
 and through the clatter of wood on cobbled stone  
 comes the awaited plangency of strings.

Into the lighted streets the clamour of voices and cars  
 drowns the hushed point of the mind intent on its dream,  
 lost in the vibrant lives that crowd and swell:  
 no roots from these lost souls can pierce the stones they tread;  
 under the trees they sit and drink and plunge white withered  
 roots  
 into their own starved souls, there seek a hideous life,  
 bound to each other with chaplets of festering flowers.  
 Then breaks on this desolation a sudden new beauty of sound,  
 and life flows from the loudspeakers hung on the trees.  
 When these streets were thought, Mozart composed this sound,  
 into the chaos of life these intricate vistas drove;  
 in a room in Vienna now, deft hands compose it anew,  
 and here in a Lisbon street I hear it who heard before.

Sing too the whispering fountains that on every side  
 spring with the flow of time; unending fountain, water from the  
 rock,  
 water from the world's soul that falls upon the earth,  
 its warm blood, the life of things, its growth and circling whole:  
 staunch it, dry up the waterspring, I die and my heart is turned  
 to stone.  
 O give me back light and sky and stars and sea, give me back  
 life.

Rises the rapid southern sun and flames across the sky,  
 what secrets wake and die at the passage of the sun:  
 out of the bottomless mind of man Apollo draws his life;



fired by the sun this beggar in the streets utters his mad cry:  
and all the unknown grief of man is loosed by the god's touch,  
withdraws into the churches that man's love and dream have  
built,  
only to spring to life by night as the stars rain down on the sea.

Sail to the Indies east and west to the Brazils,  
southward to Africa whose blood walks in these streets,  
move north, look east, in the forest, firs and oaks,  
Vienna was here before, and now again  
music from Germany in this Lisbon bay.

What is the message of the soft wind? What sings the float-  
ing swan?  
What are the words the old with their anxious eyes struggle to  
speak?  
and children unconscious of the power that moves through them  
utter in the confusion of their unlearned syllabaries?  
Plainly across the confusion of ruin and in the order of passing  
time  
is set the solution that we are yet unable to see:  
the music of falling water, the power of the hot sun,  
both speak yet neither tells and we vainly long  
for the revelation of truth that shines in the lovers' eyes,  
there more than all, in the pure light of a lovely face,  
in the radiant stars that light in the depths of the lovers' eyes,  
deep in the mystery of love renounced and the victory over self,  
is the longed-for word, but only the saints may read;  
yet it is given to us without to guess as the heart breaks  
on the lovely notes that Mozart along the years  
sends out across the world: one spirit, one desire;  
this is the pain and beauty of life; and the stars are in the sea.

EDWARD SARMIENTO.

## BRITAIN'S OBLIGATION TO POLAND

**N**either British nor French guarantees were of help to Poland. To this day in fact nobody knows what these "guarantees" were.

The words which I have set at the head of this article, recent as they may sound, were addressed by M. Molotov, Soviet

Commissar for Foreign Affairs, to the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. on 31 October, 1939. After boasting of the "swift blow" which the Red Army had dealt to our ally, Poland (which he dubbed an "ugly offspring of the Versailles Treaty"), he proceeded to refer, as quoted, to the worthlessness and mysterious nature of our guarantee and, it is reported, his remarks drew laughter from his audience.

Since the Crimean Conference would seem to have given a new edge to M. Molotov's gibe, since our guarantee (however esoteric) still binds and, it may well be, the Soviet delegates have now even more cause to be amused by a joke which we cannot be expected to share, it would be well if we could determine as closely as possible those "special responsibilities towards Poland" of which Mr. Churchill spoke on 28 September of last year.

It should be remembered that we have good reason to be hypersensitive about our obligations to Poland. In July 1920 we made a specific promise that, if the Russian armies crossed the Curzon Line, we should give the Poles every help at our disposal. We broke that pledge. As Mr. Harold Nicolson wrote, "Our credit in Europe was seriously damaged by these events." Again, a study of the deliberations of the Peace Conference of Versailles reveals that it was the first British delegate, Mr. Lloyd George, who was mainly responsible for the fatal delineation of Poland's western frontiers, the delineation which led inevitably to war. ("I suppose that this man can read," said Clemenceau wearily, "but I doubt if he ever does.") "Poland," a British expert wrote, "may be able to live with German fingers on either side of her windpipe. She cannot live with a German finger (Danzig) in her throat." Yet Lloyd George, against the unanimous recommendations of the members of the international Cambon Commission, insisted that the German finger remain in Poland's throat, and insisted in such a way that two of the chief American delegates described his attitude as "outrageous". A quarter of a century ago, it appears, we had already made ourselves responsible for the fate of Poland.

But it is with our more recent assumption of obligations that we are primarily concerned. As everyone knows, Britain and Poland signed a defensive Agreement in August 1939. This Agreement bound each of the signatories to give all possible help to the other if the other should be the victim of aggression on the part of a "European Power". The same help was to be given if a European Power threatened the independence of one of the parties, even if the threat only came by way of economic penetration. This was an assumption by the two countries of

very far-reaching commitments. From the context of the treaty, of course, it is perfectly evident that both contracting parties had Germany in mind, and that the threat of German aggression was the main source of the Agreement.

It is so evident that it has blinded most people to the indisputable fact that Britain and Poland had not *only* Germany in mind when they signed the treaty. They also had the Soviet in mind and, when they drew up their reciprocal obligations, they were well aware that a treacherous Soviet attack on Poland was, at the worst, imminent, at the best, possible. The Anglo-Polish Agreement was signed on 25 August, 1939, exactly two days after the conclusion and publication of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. If anyone suggests, therefore, that the British and Polish Governments did not contemplate the likelihood of a Russian attack in the Polish rear, it must be regretfully answered that, if he is not a fool, at least, as Mr. Runyon would say, he will do until a fool comes along. For, as early as May of that year, it was common knowledge in diplomatic circles that a Hitler-Stalin *rapprochement* was in the wind, and that a fourth partition of Poland was contemplated. On 7 May M. Coulondre, French Ambassador to Berlin, sent his chief a highly interesting account of a conversation which had taken place between an important Nazi official and a member of the French embassy. The German, arguing shrewdly that the Nazi and Soviet systems were not essentially different, insisted that something was brewing in the east, and that the Führer was coming to an agreement with Stalin to neutralize pro-Polish intervention in the west. "There have already been three partitions of Poland," he added, "believe me, you will witness a fourth."\* By July the coming partition was being discussed in Rome.† In the light of these facts, the western Foreign Offices would have been naïve indeed if they had not taken into account the possibility of a Russian stab-in-the-back.

It is beyond doubt, therefore, that Britain and Poland discussed and *provided for* the contingency of Russian aggression. When, in September 1939, the Soviet annexed the eastern half of Poland, the question arose: were we in duty bound to assist Poland against Russia, or had we no stronger obligation than we had towards Czechoslovakia at the time of Munich? There was no doubt that Russia belonged to the category "European Power", even although she was also an Asiatic Power, for Europe extends to the Urals and more than half of the U.S.S.R.'s 170 millions live to the west of those mountains. There was not even a shred of uncertainty about Russia's being an aggressor,

\* *Le Livre Jaune Français*, pp. 153-7.

† John de Courcy, *Searchlights on Europe*, p. 274.

for the Definition of Aggression signed by the Soviet in 1935 fitted only too perfectly the latest Soviet *démarche*, and disallowed as excuse any "political, military, economic or other consideration". Indeed M. Molotov's own speeches gave the whole show away: "As for our trophies in Poland, they consisted of over 900 guns, over 10,000 machine-guns, over 300,000 rifles, over 150,000,000 rifle cartridges, over 1,000,000 artillery shells, about 300 aeroplanes, etc."

The real question was this: was there a secret restricting clause in the Anglo-Polish Agreement? Did the signatories, at the time of signing, specify that the term "European Power" was to apply to Germany alone? Needless to say, if there had been a reservation, it would have been set down in black and white, for international treaties are shaped with meticulous care and leave nothing to the imagination. The question was an important one, for, if there were no explicit reservation, we had given Poland a blank cheque knowing that we might have to pay both in marks and roubles.

As was to be expected, the question was asked in the House of Commons: Did the Agreement cover aggression by Russia? The official answer was *No*. "During the negotiations which led up to the signature of the Agreement, it was understood . . . that the Agreement should only cover the case of aggression by Germany; and the Polish Government confirm that this is so."\* There was a definite reply. Yet second thoughts made one wonder if the answer were quite so final. That word "understood" was rather an enigma. One meaning of the verb "understand" is "to assume". But no one was interested in assumptions; the query concerned facts. If there had been an honest explicit reservation, why did the reply not read "It was explicitly agreed. . . ."? Better still, why did the Government not publish the operative clause? "And the Polish Government confirm that this is so," the reply ended. Would that horribly embarrassed Government be in a position to do otherwise? On examination, the answer was not so definite after all.

It was not until 15 December, 1944, that more light was thrown upon the subject. Speaking in the debate on Poland, Major Petherick, M.P., observed: "Some of us know that there was an unpublished protocol to that (the Anglo-Polish) Treaty, a protocol which I have seen with my own eyes." There *was* then an unpublished clause. His next words were rather unexpected. "That protocol," the Major continued, "if I read it correctly, and I believe I did, *further reinforces the obligation of His Majesty's Government to the Polish nation.*" This and, no doubt,

\* 19 October, 1939.

words spoken by Captain Alan Graham were too much for *The Times*. On the following day it complained, in the querulous manner so peculiarly its own, about "a widely prevalent misunderstanding about the guarantee given to Poland in 1939". "This guarantee," it continued, brushing aside what Major Petherick had revealed on the previous day, "was directed exclusively to the contingency of aggression by Germany." The assertion was not allowed to pass unchallenged. On the 20th, *The Times* carried a letter from the Polish Ambassador which said: "You . . . dwell on what you call the limitation of the British guarantee—to operate against Germany only—and alleged a number of reasons for such a limitation. Without entering fully into this delicate matter, *I must confess my inability to accept the version given in your columns.*"

What conclusion are we to draw from the official reply of 19 October, 1939, Major Petherick's revelation, the objection of the Polish Ambassador, and our Government's reluctance to publish the secret protocol? It is surely—in spite of the gallant attempt of *The Times* to face, and outstare, the facts—that the Soviet is mentioned perhaps, by name, in the protocol; and that, while we did limit our commitments to Poland *vis-à-vis* Russia, we did not shed *all* our obligations and remained bound to support Poland should Stalin, in collaboration with Hitler, seize or demand Polish territory. I do not think that the known facts allow of any other interpretation.\*

If we can honestly find a loophole in our treaty terms, and if we are small enough to get through it, by all means let us take advantage of it; but would such a loophole relieve us of the duty of fulfilling our moral obligations? While the most exact and scrupulous fulfilment of definite treaty commitments must be insisted upon, it has at the same time to be conceded that moral imperatives, if less tangible, are equally binding. It was in this spirit that Mr. Pickthorn spoke in March 1944:

. . . I do not think really that much in the way of legalistic argument about what our contract was, or in relation to whom, is of much use to us now. Nor anything else except the answer to this common-sense question. . . . Shall we be clearly seen to have done for each State on our side everything possible, everything which was not strictly and materially impossible? And especially for each State to which the war came because of its reliance

\* In the Commons, on 28 February, Mr. Eden twice explained that he had consulted his legal advisers and that, in their judgement, the protocol limited our obligations. He did *not* explain why legal advice was necessary. Since the Agreement is a model of clarity and the protocol, shaped at the same time, is presumably equally unequivocal, the painful deduction is that the lawyers were called in to find a loophole in our pledges. This Mr. Eden unhappily confirmed, for he began, "I am quite confident," realized that he was not, and switched to, "or at least I am advised . . . by my legal advisers . . ."



upon our promises and upon our general principles of conduct. If by such fidelity we retain the reliance of Europe, then everything may be won back. . . . If we lose that reliance, then I believe that everything may be lost, even after victory; and we shall be half lost if we once begin arguing about legal interpretations of our promises, or if we once begin doubting that we must do for fidelity everything that can possibly be done—using those words with extreme strictness.

That we have contracted more than ordinary moral obligations to the Poles is undeniable. They played a most important part in the Battle of Britain, when things were at their darkest for us, and it was not at all likely that a successful defence of Britain would bring in its wake the liberation of Poland. That is the tragedy of the Poles. They have had to shed their blood liberally in North Africa, in France in 1940, in Norway, in the defence of Britain, in the bloody storming of Monte Cassino, in the capture of the flying-bomb sites, in the Falaise Gap, in the holocaust of Arnhem, with no immediate gain to themselves in sight; in the blind and, it now appears, ridiculously simple belief that, if they did everything to help us, we should do everything to help them—that the Battle of Britain would not be forgotten when it came to the Battle of Poland, if it ever came to it again. So, in 1940, when Russia and America were not yet at war, and "Moscow's mouthpieces in America were picketing the White House against Lease-Lend",\* the Poles defended Britain though neither they nor we could foresee any way of delivering Poland. So they give their lives now, "pre-war Poles" from Lvov or Vilna, to whom we do not even concede the right of saying that they come from Poland.

There is a part indication of the chains with which the past and present have bound, or are binding, together the causes of Britain and Poland. These are moral obligations and painfully strong ones, but they do not stand alone. Apart from the Agreement of 1939, the British Government has committed itself to the Polish cause by explicit statements which either constituted new pledges or were an elucidation of its original contract. These statements of duty and policy are three—leaving aside the general obligations of the Atlantic Charter since it (like the Ten Commandments) turns out to have been unsigned.

The first is the official assurance which our Government gave on 18 September, 1939. That assurance condemned the Soviet invasion of Poland (17 September) as a "cynical attack", and then went on to say:

If Britain and France have been unable to avert defeat of the armies of Poland, they have assured her that they have not forgotten their obligations to her.

\* Professor D. W. Brogan, *The Spectator*, 21 January, 1944.

The second is the public statement of the Foreign Secretary, 24 June, 1941:

The Polish people . . . will redeem their freedom. That remains our pledge.

And the third is contained in the note handed by Mr. Eden to General Sikorski in July 1941:

I desire to assure you that His Majesty's Government do not recognize any territorial changes which have been effected in Poland since August 1939.

Let us take these singly, and let us take them, as they must be taken, in their context. The setting of the first was the "swift blow" at Poland's back when she was bearing the full brunt of the Nazi military machine. Poland was going down under the double onslaught. We had not been able to save her but, of course, we had never anticipated that we could give her immediate and conclusive support. Yet we took the occasion to pledge solemnly that we should fulfil our obligations, and they were none other, needless to say, than those assumed by the Agreement of August. We were not issuing a new pledge; we merely assured Poland that we had not forgotten our existing obligations. It would be most convenient if we could find ground on which to argue that we referred only to an obligation to drive the German armies out of western Poland. But, as the Soviet attack was the occasion of the official assurance, can any sane man maintain that that was what we meant? The Prime Minister's words unquestionably implied that we were bound to aid Poland against any attack upon her integrity or independence. Would even *The Times* dare to suggest that Mr. Chamberlain, that douce figure armed only with the perennial symbol of peace, the umbrella, could have found it in him to mock Poland in her distress by pledging that we should shatter the Nazi frying-pan and leave her in the Red fire? I cannot credit that even the most malign would claim that that was the substance of the Prime Minister's assurance. His words had only one meaning and, whether we approve of it or not, we must acknowledge it. It was that we should not rest until Poland was restored. Indeed, the point was evident. *The Times* itself, then more delicately edited, did not miss it. "The Poles," it declared on the following day, "have too much experience of alien tyranny and the police-state to despair, though the Gestapo and the OGPU join hands over the prostrate body of their country, for they know that they have created a debt of honour for their rescue in lands where honour is still something more than an empty word."

Now let us skip to the third pledge, leaving the second until later. The third consisted of an assurance that we did not recognize the Russian seizure of eastern Poland, and it was an underwriting of the treaty which we had just encouraged Poland to sign with the Soviet, the treaty by which the Soviet renounced, for the second time, its claim to the land east of the Ribbentrop-Molotov (roughly the Curzon) Line. This assurance was in accordance with the Atlantic Charter, the authors of which expressed their "desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of all the peoples concerned". And here we may refer to something that Mr. Churchill said in his war survey in February of last year. He remarked then that the British Government had never guaranteed any particular frontier line to Poland. This was a novel, personal version of our treaty obligations. When we guaranteed Poland against aggression, it now appeared, it was not so much *Poland* that we vouched for as *a* Poland. We had not meant that we would help to preserve Poland's integrity.\* What had been at the back of our minds was a determination to see that there would always be a Poland, even if we were not quite prepared to say exactly where. The Prime Minister was even more explicitly vague on 27 October:

... the Polish people, after their sufferings and vicissitudes, shall find in Europe an abiding home and resting-place, which, though it may not entirely coincide or correspond with the pre-war frontier of Poland, will, nevertheless, be adequate, etc.

But the Crimean Conference has to some extent removed the vagueness. The Curzon Line, twisted to give the Soviet a large bonus of the Polish oil-fields and the age-old Polish city of Lvov, is to be Poland's eastern frontier save that Russia is to make a number of contemptuous kick-backs of not the slightest importance. The western frontier is to lie on or near the Oder, and to embrace purely German territory; that is, Poland is to be forced to treat Germany in the way that her enemies falsely accuse her of treating Russia in 1920-1921. So the mantles of Frederick of Prussia and Maria Theresa fall on other shoulders.

The assertion that we had guaranteed no frontier was, however, not left unchallenged. Sir Archibald Southby declared "that we gave Poland a definite and categorical pledge regarding

\* "The monumental crime of the partition of the Partition of Poland has been repaired by the bayonets of the victorious Allies. . . . No part of the Treaty of Versailles was more in keeping with the conscience of the civilized world than this great act of justice and vindication. . . . The preservation and integrity of Poland must be regarded as a cause commanding the regard of all the world." Mr. Churchill, 4 May, 1939. The Curzon Line coincides almost exactly with the Third Partition line of 1795.

her frontiers", and he went on to quote the Government's assertion that it did not recognize territorial changes in Poland. "There is no ambiguity about that," he insisted, "there is the pledge." Was he perhaps guilty of overstatement? Certainly, at first glance, a refusal to recognize is not necessarily the same as a categorical pledge to resist. Yet in diplomatic language it comes to the same, if it is to have any meaning at all. Otherwise we are faced with the *reductio ad absurdum* that we were only promising to stick out our national tongue if the Soviet again went back on its word; that we were deliberately handing over a dud cheque. When, therefore, Mr. Eden said "I assure . . .", it is to be presumed that he was giving an assurance, and that "do not recognize any territorial changes" meant "will oppose any territorial changes".

There remains the second pledge or, to be more exact, elucidation of our original pledge. "The Polish people . . . will redeem their freedom. That *remains* our pledge." Here was an authoritative comment on our contract; we had at least guaranteed the Polish nation its freedom. And have we kept the contract? All of eastern Poland is to go to the Soviet, to go the same way as the unhappy Baltic States which had not even a Curzon Line to clutch at as they drowned. There is no whisper of a plebiscite among all these millions. "They are countless, voiceless, hopeless . . ." *Western* Poland is to be ruled by the Lublin Poles, who were dismissed as Communist lickspittles by almost every speaker in the Commons Debate of 15 December, 1944. True, the Lublin "Provisional Government" is to be more widely based. Representative Poles are to be invited to sit round the same table as the men who denounce General Bor as a traitor, but, as the *Scotsman's* London Letter observed on 14 February, "it is no secret that Marshal Stalin only recognized the Lublin Government as at present composed because it could not attract to it more representative Poles". All that remained to be said was contained in the leading article of that same paper: "In other parts of the official (Crimean) statement homage is paid to the Atlantic Charter . . . but it cannot be said that this settlement of Poland's frontier with Russia is a territorial change in accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned. It is an imposed settlement. Russia has had her way, *and the new Poland can hardly be regarded as a really independent State.*" Not only half of our ally's territory has gone; her freedom has been wrested from her too, the freedom which we have pledged that she shall redeem. For Poland, as for Germany, it is five past twelve.

And we? What is to be our fate? Unless there is a radical

change in British policy, our lot is to grieve with the Poles for what they have lost, and to envy them the priceless thing which they have retained. If that is to be our future, let the last words be M. Molotov's as were the first:

... the example of luckless Poland has recently demonstrated how little Pacts of Mutual Assistance signed by some of the European Great Powers are sometimes worth. . . .

JOHN MCKEE.

## STANDARDS OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

IN the course of any discussion on the foreign policy that this country should pursue in the future there nearly always comes a moment when reference is made to the "traditional principles of British foreign policy". The reference is sometimes accompanied by approval, sometimes by disgust. No one, however, in either case seems quite clear as to what these celebrated principles were or are. Two questions therefore confront us. What have been the traditional principles of British foreign policy? What light do they throw on the policy that should be pursued by Britain in the future?

A further question arises. How far, in the light of past experience, is it going to be possible to formulate a British policy for the future which reconciles realism and idealism, sound strategy and sound morals, British vital interests and foreign sympathy and good will?

Mainly because space is limited it is not proposed to go further back than 1815, the date which set the seal for 100 years on British naval and Imperial supremacy. (Similar reasons compel the use of the abstractions, "Britain, British policy," etc., without reference to the myriad complexities introduced by the emergence of the Commonwealth idea during the period under review.) The first point, and it is one of the principal points, is this: *From 1815 to 1914, five criteria were consciously or unconsciously accepted and applied by the statesmen who formed and carried out our foreign policy and by the publics that placed and kept them in power.* May one stress that word "criteria" rather than the more commonly used "principles"? Our policy has never, even in broad outline, been deduced from principles; it has rather sought to respond to the exigencies of changing circumstances, but it has all the time been judged by public and statesmen alike as successful or disastrous according to whether it satisfied or failed to satisfy certain criteria or standards.

The five criteria were these:

(1) Security, i.e. national and imperial survival, the acid test and ultimate requirement of "self-preservation", a purely selfish and strategic criterion. "Integral communities," Mr. Churchill has told us, "are dominated by the instinct of self-preservation." But it was Mr. Gladstone, whom pacifists have never hesitated to call one of themselves, who placed in the preface of his Midlothian programme, "To foster the strength of the Empire."

(2) Regard for certain primitive canons of international decency in our dealings with other nations, if only in the shape of respect for our pledged word and for such scanty and limited regulations as international law imposes.

(3) World peace in general and, in particular, our own immunity from war. ("I hate war, I hate war," cried Grey, when he was congratulated in the Foreign Office on 3 August, 1914, on perhaps the most successful speech of the century.)

(4) Economic prosperity for ourselves first and, if possible, for the rest of the world.

(5) Extension abroad of our own constitutional and political liberties.

Of these five criteria, honourable dealing (2) and economic prosperity (4) can be rapidly dismissed, though honourable dealing has never been neglected and has operated strongly at crucial moments, as when Germany invaded Belgium in 1914. ("If we stood aside and remained aside, I am quite sure that our moral position would be such as to have lost us all respect." (Grey: House of Commons, 3 August, 1914).)

Economic prosperity seems to have exercised little influence over the conscious minds of our Prime Ministers and Foreign Secretaries during this period, unless Canning's recognition of the independence of the South American States must be attributed to an economic motive. Joseph Chamberlain no doubt was an economic imperialist, but cannot be placed on the highest level as an effective influence on our foreign policy, whatever his aspirations in that direction.

Constitutional progress abroad (5) can hardly be said to have been a criterion uninterruptedly employed, but it is none the less entitled to a place on our list. The greatest names before us are those of Castlereagh, Canning, Aberdeen, Palmerston, Disraeli, Gladstone, Salisbury, Lansdowne and Grey. (Clarendon and Granville, eminent diplomats though they were, gave our policy no distinctive colouring.) Of these nine, Castlereagh, Aberdeen, Disraeli, Salisbury and Lansdowne were Conservatives with no particular sympathy for popular movements. Canning was a Conservative of what would now be called a



progressive type. Palmerston, Gladstone and Grey were Whigs or Liberals with little sympathy for revolutionaries but a strong dislike of autocrats. All nine, however, with the possible exception of Castlereagh, vastly preferred whatever system of government prevailed in Britain during their time to rule by arbitrary and despotic tyrants such as they witnessed all too often in Austria, Prussia and Russia, and all of them hated the sight of widespread physical suffering occasioned by ruthless oppression.

Self-interest tended to point in the same direction. "The independence of constitutional states," said Palmerston, "never can be a matter of indifference to the British Parliament, nor, I should hope, to the British public. Constitutional states I consider to be the natural allies of this country." Foreigners in a matter of this kind may well be the best judges and Britain, who tried to steer a middle course between tyrants and revolutionaries, was, on the whole, looked to throughout the century with far more approval and hope by the revolutionaries than by the tyrants.

A sixth criterion might be added, which we may call 1A. This sixth criterion is Political Expansion, in other words an increase in the size of the area marked red on the map. Apart from Disraeli (1874-80), no Prime Minister, nor Foreign Secretary, nor (with the exception of Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary at the turn of the century) any British statesman of the first rank during this period of 100 years could be described as a keen expansionist in principle—certainly not Castlereagh, nor Canning, nor Aberdeen, nor Palmerston, nor Gladstone, nor Salisbury, nor Lansdowne, nor Grey. Yet Professor Moon, in his *Imperialism and World Politics*, is able to point out that the British Empire has been nearly doubled since 1874. The expansion has been viewed by those responsible for our foreign policy as necessary to our security in an age when other countries were stretching their limbs and trying their wings. Since 1815 imperial precedence over all other nations has been consistently regarded, not as a luxury, but as a basic necessity, without which we should first sink to the level of a second-rate power and soon prove quite incapable of feeding our present population. The imperial scramble at the end of the nineteenth century was welcomed by Lord Salisbury as little as by Gladstone. ("I heartily wish," said Salisbury, on 23 February, 1887, "we had never gone into Egypt.") But once the queue had begun to move forward we were determined to keep our place in front as a condition of our very survival. The question, however, as to how far British foreign policy has been territorially expan-

sionist in the past has only an academic significance to us in 1945. Further expansion of British territory in the years immediately ahead is ruled out alike by lack of impulse and lack of opportunity.

Two criteria very present to our minds since 1918, of which a good deal more will be said below, were absent during the earlier period. These were: (6) Territorial Justice and (7) the question we now ask of any major international development: Does it or does it not assist the formation of an Organized International Society? Even without these additions the old criteria proved difficult enough to apply. So often we were faced with a situation where Self-Preservation (1), Peace (3) and Constitutional Progress (5) failed to point in an identical direction.

Castlereagh's scheme for co-operation with the autocratic powers (Austria, Russia and Prussia) after 1815 would have made Peace more certain (criterion 3) but flew straight in the face of Constitutional Progress (criterion 5). Speaking generally, the more liberal the Minister (Gladstone, for example) the harder the task of co-operating with a continent predominantly reactionary. Palmerston laid down the proposition (already quoted) that constitutional states were the natural allies of this country, but strongly supported Turkish misrule throughout the Crimean and post-Crimean period, subordinating both Peace and Progress to Self-preservation. Our near-Eastern record from the death of Canning onwards might indeed seem clear proof that when self-preservation was involved all the other criteria went by the board. Such a conclusion, however, would be unfair to the idealistic side of our policy. It is true that in the late '70s Disraeli's Government was still backing Turkey at the risk of war and in defiance of Constitutional Progress, and in the teeth of Gladstone's denunciation from the Opposition Benches. Yet in 1895 Salisbury at last concluded that the atrocities of the Sultan were more than we could stomach even for the sake of strategic interests.

Lady Gwendolyn Cecil tells us that British vital interests in his eyes overrode all other considerations. "His primary interest was national. The supremacy of the interests of England over all other objects of policy is recurrent in his letters; it was accepted without question as a trustee's loyalty." Salisbury himself was just as explicit. "The duties of humanity, I am very far from disputing, but I am not prepared to accept the new Gospel, which I understand is preached—that it is our business for the sake of any populations whatever to disregard the trust which the people of this country and our Sovereign have reposed in our hands." (17 January, 1878.) Nevertheless,

our abandonment and repudiation of Turkey from the middle '90s onwards is clear proof that where the very existence of this country was not manifestly at stake we were prepared to surrender strategic advantages for the sake of Peace or Progress.

The criteria referred to seem to have been the ultimate standards which our statesmen and our people have applied when judging the success or failure of our policy during any given period. "Principles" frequently mentioned, such as the Balance of Power, the Independence of Holland and Belgium, the Two-Power Naval Standard, the safety of our Imperial communications (in particular, of the route to India), our special position in the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, etc.—these should rather be regarded as techniques or devices for satisfying the criteria described. They have served pre-eminently the first criterion—national security or survival. They may be classed, therefore, as primarily strategical techniques.

In saying this, however, one should add two notes in passing. (a) One must not overlook the British conviction that sound British strategy is not only a British but a world interest. In other words, a strong Britain is far more capable than a weak Britain of promoting the ends indicated by the second, third, fourth and fifth criteria, namely, honourable dealing between nations, international peace, economic prosperity, and the spread of constitutional and political liberties. (b) It should be recognized also that the *Balance of Power* has been regarded not only as a British strategical device, but as a means of stabilizing international relationships in general, especially relations between the great powers in Europe. It is far too narrow a view of the Balance of Power to talk as though what was aimed at was simply the prohibition of European domination by one overlord, whether Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV, Napoleon, the Kaiser, or Hitler. What was aimed at in the old (i.e. pre-1914) diplomacy was an equilibrium of forces which would leave no great power with at once the motive and the capacity to upset the general balance.

After the Napoleonic War, Castlereagh, posthumously approved by Salisbury in a famous Essay, showed supreme contempt for the principles of what we now call self-determination, lumping together, for example, Holland and Belgium, not because they wished it but as a check to French aggression. In his view, whether war did or did not break out depended on the relations between the few great powers and the only service we could perform to the small powers was to use them adroitly in the interests of general peace to stuff the cracks in the edifice formed by the great ones. Words that he used of

Castlereagh's policy may be applied not inaptly to his own. "He knew the very different values of the boons for which men indiscriminately clamoured. The graduation in his mind seems to have stood thus: he cared for *nationality not at all* (italics ours); for the theoretic perfection of political institutions, very little; for the realities of freedom, a great deal; and for the peace, and social order and freedom from the manifold curses of disturbance, which can alone give to the humbler masses of mankind any chance of tasting their scanty share of human joys—for the sake of this, he was quite ready to forgo all the rest. He sought above all other things so to establish the balance of power that it should not be easily overthrown, and to maintain it jealously as the sole pledge of peace." One may note also Palmerston's concern for the maintenance of the Austrian Empire as the "keystone of the European arch", in spite of his intense disapproval of its internal regime and his encouragement to the forces of Italian nationalism.

So much for our pre-1914 criteria of foreign policy. Against their background we did our share, and a good deal more than our share, in providing Europe with the most peaceful century it had enjoyed for many centuries, the most prosperous century it had ever enjoyed and, incidentally, acquired for ourselves overseas, whether or not legitimately by present-day standards, the best of all that was going.

After 1918 there was a widespread revolt throughout the world, and not least in this country, against something called "the old diplomacy" (supposed to have been quite as responsible as the Germans for the war) and a tremendous torrent of feeling in favour of Wilsonian principles. Much of this, as exemplified, for example, in Lowes-Dickinson's *International Anarchy*, centred round the supposed secrecy (and therefore, dishonesty) of pre-war international politics. We have no immediate concern with that issue in so far as it simply raises the question of one diplomatic method versus another. The slogan of "democratic diplomacy" has, however, affected the "principles of British foreign policy" in the sense that, coupled with the general movement towards democracy in this country, it has infected our statesmen, with a few noticeable exceptions such as Mr. Churchill, with the idea that they should not only hold themselves responsible to the public, but actually look to the public for the formulation of a foreign policy. Not unnaturally, they have looked in vain.

Where do we find ourselves today? In 1918, the old, the tough, the realistic, the traditional foreign policy, with all its associations of power politics, was in a fair way to being dis-

credited in this country. By 1939, the new, the idealistic, the open democratic diplomacy, concerned not only or so much with British interests as with the good of the world, seemed to many to have provided us with twenty-one years of the most unsuccessful foreign policy that this country has ever seen or suffered from. Certainly, if a group of lunatics or traitors had been in charge of our foreign policy from 1918 to 1940, they could hardly of set purpose have produced a more cataclysmic change for the worse than that which we experienced between those two dates. In these circumstances, there is a danger, apparent both on the Right and on the Left, to despair of idealism altogether in foreign affairs, to believe that we have been barking up the wrong tree since 1918, to try to put the clock back and to worship uncritically at the shrines of the pre-1914 figures, who at least maintained and enhanced our strength and kept us out of any great war for just on 100 years. It is against this spirit that protest is so necessary at the present hour. A moment's reflection reveals the impossibility of trying to retrace our steps. It is only by going forward boldly that we can hope to find our way back onto the main road of progress.

What were the main differences between the pre-1914 and the post-1918 outlook? They were two in number, for two new criteria were adopted. First, the criterion of territorial justice, as expressed particularly in the principle of self-determination which Castlereagh and Salisbury, for example, were at such pains to reject. Second, the question asked since 1918 of any new trend of policy: Does it or does it not promote the formation of an organized international society?

It is the second of these new criteria whose implications can alone be touched on here. Before 1914, there was no serious hope or prospect of rising above the system of international anarchy in which aggressive war was not forbidden by international law and in which our country was, in the last resort, judge in her own disputes. Since 1918 we have been sustained by the hope of building in the immediate future, whether through the Covenant of the League of Nations or the machinery of Dumbarton Oaks, or otherwise, an international society. In such a society our country would find her sovereignty impaired in two ways. In the first place, collective security might involve her resources and fighting services being at the disposal of an international body in a struggle where no direct British interest was involved. In the second place, to submit to third-party judgement in our own disputes would deprive us of the ultimate yea or nay in which has hitherto seemed to lie the very essence of sovereignty. Such interference with the freedom of



action of great powers is unprecedented since nation states arose, but then, as Mr. Churchill has pointed out, "the history of the human race is war". It is hardly likely that this traditional and persistent failure which runs throughout human history will be liquidated in the space of a few years except by remedies as drastic as they are unprecedented.

The problem, then, is to pursue with renewed ardour the ideal of a world society, burnt into our brains for the first time by the war of 1914-1918, and a second time by the experience of the last five years, and yet to benefit this time, as we failed to do last time, from the wisdom of the old masters: Castlereagh, Palmerston, Gladstone, Salisbury and the rest.

Where did we go wrong between 1918 and 1939? We went wrong in assuming that their first criterion, national survival, was, if not actually sinful, something that in a healthy and moral-minded community should be taken for granted and should never become an object of national policy. We were as hostile to shrewd business-like diplomacy, to principles such as standing by friends and standing up to foes, as we were to providing ourselves with the necessary human and material armaments. The custodians of national defence were tainted and taunted and, as the result, by 1939-40 we found ourselves face to face with national extinction.

We were not altogether at fault. We were right to cling to the old criteria (2) to (5) (Honourable Healing, Peace, Economic Prosperity, Political Progress), a thousand times right to add the new criteria of (6) Justice and (7) the promotion of an Organized International Society. We were a thousand times wrong not to realize with the great statesmen of the nineteenth century that without satisfying the first criterion of all (national survival) it would be literally impossible to begin to satisfy the others.

Their problem was in most respects easier than ours. We were far more of an island in those days than now. We never, it is true, adopted the policy so often attributed to us of Splendid Isolation, but from 1815 to 1904, when we made the Entente with France, the free hand was an essential element in all we did. The idea of curbing our national sovereignty in the way that it is suggested here will prove indispensable would have seemed unthinkable to all of them. Nor did they recognize any habitual obligation to promote territorial justice or self-determination (as we do instinctively today in cases such as those of Poland and Greece). Nor did any problem confront them remotely comparable to the task of re-educating Germany and Japan. On the other hand, they had to make their influence



felt without conscription, without a substantial army or the compensating advantages that the air arm has brought us in exchange for the new dangers with which it has threatened us. When all is said and done, however, our position compared with theirs would be sad and sorry if it were not for the emergency of a power as strong as our own on the American continent, a power with whom it is unthinkable that we should ever go to war and which shows signs of becoming a closer friend than this Empire has ever possessed throughout its history.

Britain has won an unrivalled empire partly by the enterprise of individuals, partly by war, partly by diplomacy and partly by trade. It would be too much to claim that in building this empire she has acted as an official mandatory of the civilized world, but British people are entitled to feel that they would never have been allowed to acquire this empire if, on the whole, it had not constituted and been regarded as a blessing rather than a curse to humanity. British foreign policy in the past has, no doubt, been primarily concerned with securing British interests, but our wisest statesmen have always realized that our position of strategic privilege must be exercised in a fashion that took world interests into account. One need only recall Castlereagh's explicit attempt to "bring back the world to peaceful habits": Palmerston's complicated endeavours in 1848 to assist the cause of progress without disturbing the European balance of power: Gladstone's indomitable internationalism, never more splendidly exemplified than in his acceptance of arbitration in the "Alabama" case: Salisbury's "good neighbour" policy: Grey's operation during the Balkan Wars of a genuine European Concert, cutting across the rival alliances.

Today we may appear to be confronted with a dilemma. We seem to be in the position of an aristocrat whose privileges are bound to be impaired if a democratic regime is installed. Put more bluntly, *would an organized world society tolerate the British Empire in its present form and, if not, can we afford an organized world society?* The answer here offered is admittedly one which requires an act of faith in the future. If there are any features of the British Empire which a world society would refuse to tolerate, the sooner those features are removed the better. Progress towards such a world society cannot in any case be easy. We must reject alike the advice of the tough guys, the hard-faced realists who rule out the world society as a Utopian ideal, and that of the sentimentalists who will call on us to set an example of unilateral disarmament and surrender. To sum it all up in three propositions: (1) there will be another world war within say twenty years unless a world society is brought into

being with the moral outlook, the political machinery and the physical force to settle on a basis of justice all disputes likely to lead to war; (2) the responsibility falls on Britain more than any other country for bringing such a society to birth, nor has any single country so much to gain from such a development; (3) Britain will not be in a position to play this part unless her strategic and foreign policies are conducted with due regard to the traditional wisdom of those who handled British foreign policy during the nineteenth century.

A British policy so conceived is one which it should be possible to explain without difficulty or embarrassment to all the nations of the world be they great or small, in the confidence that sympathy and support will not be found wanting for endeavours so manifestly in the interests of all.

FRANK PAKENHAM.

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## PRUSSIA AND GERMANY

THE German problem, it cannot be too often repeated, is the capital political problem of Europe. The defeat of Germany and the effective destruction of its power to attack its neighbours will not, in themselves, ensure a lasting peace, but without them peace is impossible. To the German problem there is more than one approach. That which seems most popular at the moment is the political approach, favoured by ideologues of all kinds who see in the war, not a struggle between nations, but a conflict between rival forms of government. Having come to the conclusion that the political system they favour—Democracy or Socialism or whatnot—is the panacea for all ills, they make the entirely gratuitous assumption that the German people, the representatives of that “other” and “true” Germany, must secretly share their views. Apart from a few entirely unrepresentative refugees there is no evidence in support of their attitude. There is nothing to show that any particular form of government will make a really fundamental difference to German militarism. As early as December, 1918, Ebert, the representative in his day of that “other” and “genuinely democratic” Germany, had come to terms with Groener, the Chief-of-Staff, in order to restore order and crush the few genuine revolutionaries. Liebknecht, the only deputy to oppose Germany’s entry into the war, was murdered by the nationalists, and so was Rosa Luxemburg, the most prominent of the Socialists who were not in favour of the war. Kautsky and the majority of the Socialists supported the government, to the fury of Lenin.

But indeed Kautsky was nearer the policy of Marx, who justified Prussia's seizure of Schleswig and in 1870, when the French workers appealed to their German comrades in the name of international solidarity, characterized their appeal as "pure jingoism" and said that "the French need a thrashing", while he wrote later: "If we have any influence at Paris, we must prevent the working men from moving until peace is made"—made, that is, in favour of Prussia. And Thomas Mann, who is now accounted the chief representative of the "other Germany", not only did not oppose the attack on Belgium and France, but wrote a treatise on Frederick the Great implicitly defending it. Instances could be multiplied almost indefinitely. The political approach to the German problem is entirely subjective; it has no real relation to the facts. In the same way, in anthropology the pseudo-scientists put forward unproven theories as "the conclusions of Science" and build one hypothesis upon another until the whole crazy card house collapses under the impact of some new discovery, after which they rebuild it with as little alteration as possible.

But in anthropology there is a method which applies equally to the German problem, much less spectacular indeed, but having none of the disadvantages of mistaking undemonstrated theories for facts. This is the historical approach. It requires more study and more intellectual effort than the popular alternative, but in a question of such basic importance it is futile to expect an easy solution of all difficulties without any trouble. The political approach is in fact simply a substitute for hard thinking, and its pseudo-humanitarian conclusions have an appeal to intellectuals of the Left who still firmly believe, *au fond*, in the "natural goodness of man", and are therefore constitutionally susceptible to the suggestion that it is only a particular form of government, called Nazism, which has made the Germans aggressive, and that we are accordingly fighting not against the Germans, but against the Nazis. The historical approach, on the other hand, is rather more complex and difficult, but has the advantage of arriving at the truth. It is also free from the unreal distinction already referred to, which makes very little appeal to the peoples of Europe who have suffered twice in one lifetime from the incursions of the Germans.

Discussion of the problem is made difficult by the misuse of language. To talk of the "German nation" as if it were on the same footing as the French nation or the English nation, for example, is to pre-judge, and to mis-judge, the whole question at the very beginning. The parallel between the achievement of Italian and German unity in the nineteenth century is particularly

misleading. To talk of the "German nation" is like talking of the "Slav nation". It is much more accurate to talk of Germany as a racial empire. Let there be no mistake. To talk of the German race is not to imply that it is either "pure", as the Germans allege, or that it is suffering from a sort of second original sin, as Lord Vansittart is unjustly accused of believing. On the other hand, the German race is a quite distinct and recognizable phenomenon, just as the Slav race is. To say so is not to adopt the racial heresy, for the statement that races exist merely recognizes an obvious difference between peoples of the human family, and the abuse of the term by Nazi theorists does not make every use of it illegitimate. It is therefore illuminating to suppose that the ambitions of the Pan Slavs had been fulfilled and a Slav State including Russia, Poland and part of the Balkans had been set up, and to compare this hypothetical "Slavia" with Germany. Such a State could only come into being under the domination of Russia, just as united Germany only came into being under the domination of Prussia, and no doubt there would also be "separatists" desiring a return to previous conditions. The analogy is not, of course, exact, for the national consciousness of Poland, for example, is much more developed than that of, say, Bavaria. But it is far more accurate than the implication that Germany is similar to France, which has no racial unity, but a very definite national unity.

It is a matter of history that the Germans were only united politically by the power of Prussia, and that ever since they have become increasingly Prussianized, until the whole people is almost indistinguishable from its masters. But we must not confuse cause and effect. The fact that the Germans have been united and Prussianized does not mean that Bismarck's work cannot be undone, or that the Germans are inevitably Prussianized and consequently aggressive. This is, of course, the conclusion of those who speak of Germany as a nation, but it is a conclusion of despair. It is more accurate to regard the Germans as a people dominated by an evil tradition, a disease, a virus—something which can, eventually, be eliminated, however long the cure may take.

The origins of that evil tradition can be traced back to the tenth century, to the frontier warfare between Germans and Slavs. It arose from what may be called "the colonial mentality". This had nothing in common, naturally, with English methods of colonizing. The Germans, in a far more primitive condition, were ruthlessly seizing the land of their neighbours, who were on much the same level of civilization as themselves. It is true that the Germans were Christians before the Slavs

and made missionary zeal the excuse for their depredations, but it was a Christianity only too often merely skin deep. The English colonist, on the other hand, comes of a fully developed culture and brings with him considerable benefits for the natives. Furthermore, his attitude towards them is one of assured superiority, so that he has no need, as had the Germans, to assert it by brutality and oppression. But the German domination of the Slavs was always precarious, for the two races fought on more or less equal terms, and the fortunes of war did not always go to the Germans. These reasons are sufficient to explain why the latter adopted a policy of ruthless extermination and enslavement. Most of what is now German territory between the Elbe and the Oder and along the Baltic even farther west was once inhabited by Slavs. Hamburg was originally Bogbor, Brandenburg was once the Slav stronghold of Branibor. Traces of Slav origin remain, and the Prussian census of 1890, for example, shows 570 people in the Luchow district of the Luneberg Regency in Hanover who said their native language was Venedian, a Slav dialect. The Slav tribes were eliminated by barbarity and treachery: thus in 939 the "Margrave" Geron invited thirty Slav princes to a feast and then murdered them. This barbarous colonial tradition explains both the excessive servility of the common people of Prussia and the arrogance of the junker class, so different from similar *cadres* in other countries. Christian Berger, a Protestant Pastor of the Rhineland, seized upon the essentially colonial mentality of the Prussians when he wrote: "It must be remembered that the reason why we speak today of the March of Brandenburg is that it represents a colony, an outpost, conquered and administered in accordance with the principles of war. . . . How can this colonial territory, its natural basis so largely foreign, suddenly appear as the essential substance of Germany, and how can this late addition to the motherland take it upon itself to lead and govern her? Of course, the Prussians say in these days that they are completely German, that they have long lost the character of colonists. But the facts, national and psychological, testify to the contrary". "Prussia," said Moeller van den Bruck, "is the greatest act of colonization undertaken by Germany, just as Germany will be the greatest political act of the Prussians."

The conquest and absorption of the tribes between the Elbe and the Oder, which Hitler considers one of the greatest achievements of the German race, was facilitated by their lack of unity and the absence of strong government. But by the time the Germans reached the Oder, Poland had emerged as an organized State under its first Christian ruler Mieszko I (965). For cen-



turies the bulwark of the Oder held firm, and even when the Germans had burst through it, they never succeeded in colonizing the land to the east of it with anything like the same success or the same thoroughness as farther west. In 1157 the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa wrote: "Poland is well defended by artificial fortifications as well as by her natural position. For that reason our Royal and Imperial forefathers reached the Oder only with the greatest difficulty. . . . On 22 August, despite the opposition of the Poles who were lying in wait, we crossed with our whole army the River Oder, which, like a wall, surrounds that State; and sweeping through the bishoprics of Breslau and Poznan we laid waste the whole country with fire and sword." This is a revealing indication of German methods, and even the ecclesiastical hierarchy were at times little better, and Adelgot, Archbishop of Magdeburg, demonstrated the hypocrisy of Germany's "missionary zeal" when he said in the twelfth century: "These pagans are the worst people on earth, but their land is the best, because it is so abundant in meat, honey, flour and game, that there is no land like it. Therefore go to the east, O Saxons, there you may save your souls and gain for yourselves the best land in which to live."

Henceforward the enmity between Prussia and Poland is the dominating factor in the history of the two countries, as Bismarck recognized in 1886 when he said: "We will never consent to the resurrection of Poland. Between Prussia and Poland there is a struggle for existence." In the ordinary course of events, a more or less stable frontier between the two peoples might have been established, and in the course of time the evil tradition might have withered. Two things ensured its continuance. One was the colonizing of East Prussia and the other, closely related to it, the canalization of the Prussian tradition in the Order of Teutonic Knights. The existence of East Prussia as an independent German stronghold threatening Poland's strategic flank and its vital access to the sea has ensured that the quarrel between the two peoples shall continue indefinitely. It is a mistake to imagine that propaganda in favour of the return of the so-called "Corridor", really the province of Pomorze, perhaps the most Polish part of the whole country, was confined to the Nazis. It was quite as strong under Stresemann, who at the time of Locarno, on 7 September, 1925, wrote to the Crown Prince: "The third great task of Germany is the readjustment of our eastern frontiers, the recovery of Danzig, the Polish Corridor, and a correction of the frontier in Upper Silesia", and in May of the same year he had, according to the *Neuer Vorwärts* of February, 1934 (quoted in General Sikorski's



*Modern Warfare*, p. 27), informed a group of journalists "that the territorial losses in the west were for the moment impossible to avoid, but that in the east, on the contrary, the revision of treaties was not only possible, but necessary. To bring about the possibility of this revision in the east, to take back the Corridor and Upper Silesia, was the meaning of his agreement with France. This aim would be attained in four or five years at the latest."

The origins of the so-called "Corridor" and East Prussia are accordingly not only interesting, but of the utmost importance for the future stability of Europe, since only in the radical elimination of the trouble is there any hope of lasting peace between Germany and Poland. The Teutonic Order, like the Templars and the Knights of St. John, was in the first place intended for service in the Holy Land. In 1191 German merchants from Bremen and Lubeck founded a hospital at Acre and with it the Brotherhood of the German House, out of which in 1198 grew the Order of Teutonic Knights. It was, however, an insignificant body until the Emperor Frederick II, the "Stupor Mundi" virtually refounded it. His great friend and adviser, Hermann of Salza, was Grand Master of the Order for more than twenty years till his death in 1239, and he was the first of the strong and masterful leaders produced by the Knights. In the winter of 1225-26 Conrad, Duke of Masovia (Poland had by this time been divided under various independent princes), invited the Order to help him against the still heathen tribe of Prussen on the Baltic Coast. He granted them a charter of land for twenty years, but the Order forged another document to prove that they had been promised the province of Dobrzyn in perpetuity. This forgery is disputed by German historians, but there is little reason to doubt it, as the Order had behaved in precisely the same way a few years earlier, when in 1211 the King of Hungary had given them land and they had forged a Charter which greatly enlarged his grant; as, moreover, it was apparent that they intended to set up their own State independent of the King, he expelled them, after some difficulty, in 1225. The Order scored a further success against the Poles by obtaining the "Golden Bull" of Rimini from the Emperor in 1226. Ignoring the fact that the Cistercians were already Christianizing the heathen tribes of the Baltic Coast under the direct authority of the Pope, he said that "all gifts and conquests are to be the free property of the Order, which is to exercise full territorial Rights and to be responsible to none". It was to be "an integral part of the monarchy of the Empire", for, argued Frederick, "God hath chosen the Roman Empire for the preaching of His Gospel: let us therefore bend our minds to the conquest, no less than the

conversion, of the heathen peoples". This was, of course, a direct challenge to the Papacy. The Order thus imbibed from the start something of the pagan spirit of the Emperor, who conducted himself more like an Eastern despot than a mediaeval Christian King, and was regarded by his followers almost as a god, while his enemies considered him Anti-Christ. He also transmitted to the Order the ideas of government which he had already put into practice in Sicily, and which, at the risk of being anachronistic, may be called totalitarian. Both Sicily and the dominions of the Knights were more centralized, despotic and dependent on the government than any other part of Europe.

In 1231 the army of the Order crossed the Vistula, and they rapidly began the conquest of the Prussen, which was completed by 1280. Their aim was to occupy the whole of the Baltic coastline, in order to cut off the Slavs from the sea and thus to become their masters. In this object they were nearly successful. In 1308 they were summoned to help the Poles against the Margrave of Brandenburg, but although they made a pretence of doing so, they treacherously seized Danzig instead, and on 14 November massacred the inhabitants. "No person of Polish nationality", wrote the Polish chronicler Deugosz, "was spared, whatever his condition, sex or age, but they put to death without mercy individuals of age and under age, including children and infants at the breast, so that the news of this cruelty should spread and break the nerve of others who would fear to offer resistance in other towns and fortified places, and thereby render secure their occupation of the said land. Seldom was the spilling of Polish blood attending the conquest of any place more profuse, seldom the slaughter more inhuman." The fate of Warsaw and Rotterdam is nothing new in Prussian annals. When Pope Clement V, in a *Bull* from Avignon on 19 June, 1310, drew up a list of charges against the Order, including the massacre of 10,000 people in Danzig, its representative replied with typical effrontery that "the mentioned citizens destroyed the houses of the town of their own free will and went to live in other parts".

In 1396 the Order captured the province of Samogitia by treachery and thus united East Prussia to Kurland and Livonia which they already held. The whole of the Baltic coastline bordering the hinterland of Poland and Lithuania was in their hands. But in the meantime by the Union of Krewa in 1385 Poland and Lithuania had joined together against the common enemy. In the next year Jagiello the Lithuanian married Jadwiga, Queen of Poland, became a Christian and was crowned as Wladyslaw III. The union bore fruit in 1410 when in a battle

between the villages of Grunwald and Tannenberg the Teutonic Order suffered a decisive defeat. It is significant that in 1914 Hindenburg and Ludendorf called their victory over General Samsonov the "Battle of Tannenberg" and claimed it as their "revenge on the Slavs", though the second battle did not take place in Tannenberg itself and was fought against a different nation. And in September, 1939, one of the first things to be destroyed in Crakow was the Grunwald monument by Pius Welonski which Paderewski had unveiled in 1910 on the fifth centenary of the battle. Grunwald was a defeat for Prussianism which had decisive consequences, and the power of the Knights was broken for ever, though unfortunately their tradition remained, and with it their dominion in East Prussia.

Their propaganda on the whole was highly successful. Their pose as "crusaders" deceived Europe far more than Hitler's. Its effects are apparent in the fact that Chaucer says of his "verrai parfit gentle knight" that (some time before Grunwald, of course):

*Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne  
Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce.*

In 1511 Albrecht of Hohenzollern became Grand Master of the Order, and in 1525 he took advantage of the Reformation to secularize the lands of the Knights, which henceforth became the Duchy of Prussia. The Poles at first stipulated that it should not be inherited by the Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg; their power over the Duchy was demonstrated when Albrecht knelt in the market place of Crakow to do homage to Zygmund I, and in Albrecht's old age Poland intervened successfully in the affairs of the Duchy, executing or banishing his chief advisers for treason. But in 1563 Zygmund August II weakly gave permission for Joachim II of Brandenburg to succeed to Prussia because he was married to a Polish princess.

The work of the Teutonic Knights was now completed. They had handed on their evil tradition to the new composite state of Brandenburg and Prussia, which henceforth had as its chief aim total independence of Poland and the consolidation of its territory. The Knights have been seized upon as a symbol by the Nazis and the Nationalists. Moeller van den Bruck called them "Prussians before the Prussians", and remarked upon the "special aesthetic significance" of the Order's uniform of black and white, "those serious Nordic colours, which are really not colours at all". And the *élite* of the Nazi youth is trained in some of the old strongholds of the Order, whose work is praised in their history text-books.

In 1660 the Great Elector succeeded in throwing off Polish suzerainty. "He inaugurated Prussian politics," as Moeller van

den Bruck remarked. Henceforward the story is better known, and may be more briefly sketched. In 1701 Frederick I was crowned King of Prussia; his successor, Frederick William I, built up one of the largest and most highly trained armies in Europe, and finally Frederick the Great was left to make it his instrument. There is no need to dilate upon the treachery and brutality of Frederick's political methods; they are too well known. Not the least important part of his work was the complete reconciliation of nobles and Crown. Hitherto there had been mistrust between the two, but he succeeded in taking the nobility into partnership by guaranteeing and protecting its privileges. It thus became a mainstay of the *régime* and one of the chief depositaries of the Prussian tradition. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of the work of the Prussian Kings in uniting and unifying their conglomeration of provinces; they did it by complete despotism and ruthless repression. Then came Frederick's crowning infamy, the Partitions of Poland, which he suggested to Catherine the Great in 1769. As a result Prussian territory was consolidated as it had never been before. Even the crushing defeat of Jena in 1806 did not destroy its potential strength. The Congress of Vienna awarded the Prussians, who were no longer considered a menace, the Rhine provinces, which were of a totally different tradition and have never ceased to resent their subservience to Berlin. In the middle of the century Bismarck began his work of Prussianizing the rest of Germany, which he did by eliminating Austria at Sadowa in 1866 and by defeating France in 1870. His work has endured, despite the defeat of 1914-18, and German unity under Prussian domination has even become more absolute by reason of the overthrow of the various local monarchies and principalities, and by the abolition of their sovereign status by Hitler.

This extensive but partial survey of the growth of the Prussian spirit and its tradition of barbarism and treachery is worth making because of its bearing upon the future of Europe. Germany was only united by Prussianism, and as long as it remains united it will remain Prussian, because any unified German state is ultimately a function of the Reichswehr and the General Staff. Without the Army, Germany would have dissolved into its component parts after the last war. Even though the memory of separatism is becoming ever dimmer, it will no doubt reappear after the present struggle. To de-Prussianize Germany will not be easy; but it is easier to eliminate an evil tradition than to rob a nation of its inherent characteristics. It might be inadvisable to impose the division of Germany, but it is certainly necessary to encourage every element of separatism; and to

ensure that the General Staff does not secretly continue to exercise power it is imperative to enforce its total disarmament for many years to come.

To destroy the ultimately spiritual evil of the Prussian tradition only spiritual good will suffice. But the "re-education" of the Germans, so much discussed at present, can only mean their reconversion and not lectures by foreign pacifist school-teachers with Leftist views. But before Germany can become effectively Christian again it is necessary to destroy Prussia as a political power. A decentralized Germany freed from Prussian domination is a prerequisite for the peace of Europe.

R. ARNOLD JONES.

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### SOME RECENT BOOKS

*The Four Gospels.* By Dom John Chapman. Pp. viii + 64. (Sheed & Ward. 1944. 4s. 6d.)

THERE are two chief schools of thought among Catholics in regard to the Synoptic Problem, the problem of the origins and mutual dependence of the first three Gospels. Firstly there are those who believe in a solution based on literary dependencies, and secondly those who think that the similarities are best explained by a common use of a basic oral tradition or catechesis. The latter view never found favour with Abbot Chapman, who rightly held that the evidences of mutual literary dependence are palpable and inescapable. For him and for the majority of those who have tackled the problem the solution must lie along the lines of literary dependence. But there is no unanimity among the experts as to its precise character.

Among non-Catholic students there is a practically unanimous agreement that St. Mark's Gospel was the first to be written, and that it saw the light between A.D. 65-70. This view runs counter to the constant tradition of the Church, but none the less was widely held by Catholic scholars until the Biblical Commission announced in 1911 that the arguments adduced (all based on internal evidence) were not sufficient to overthrow the most ancient tradition of the priority of St. Matthew's Gospel over Mark.

For those Catholic scholars like Chapman, who had hitherto accepted the priority of Mark, this was a difficult and heart-searching period. Two courses were open to them, either to be silent or to review the whole question dispassionately in order to see whether the internal arguments adduced by the believers in the priority of Mark were as strong as they seemed. Hence Lagrange developed his "theory of mutual dependence" in which, while proclaiming the priority of the *Aramaic* Matthew over Mark, he was yet able to maintain the priority of Mark over the *Greek* Matthew (which was held to



be to some extent indebted to Mark, though substantially identical with the Aramaic Matthew). Though this theory is thoroughly orthodox and quite within the bounds of possibility, it did not commend itself to Abbot Chapman when he sat down to think out the whole problem afresh at the beginning of the last Great War. The conclusion he came to was that the internal evidence when viewed in its correct perspective, instead of destroying, actually supported the traditional view of the priority of the *Greek* Matthew, and that he had been misled in his youth into a too-facile acceptance of the priority of Mark and the existence of Q.

Some critics have inferred by innuendo that his change of opinion—though he may have been convinced of his own sincerity—was dictated by the decree of the Biblical Commission. Those who remember Abbot Chapman will laugh at the idea that he would ever have changed his mind unless he had first been absolutely satisfied intellectually about the truth of his new position. His change of mind was not made under any form of duress but was the result of sheer intellectual conviction.

He recognized fully the need for an authoritative body to tell Catholic students and thinkers when and where they ceased to be orthodox. Great scholar as he was, he never suffered from intellectual pride, and he came to be deeply grateful for the decree, which set him upon the lines that in his opinion led to the true solution of the Synoptic Problem.

The lectures here printed for the first time on the initiative, and under the editorship, of Dom Gregory Murray were delivered when he was in the prime of his intellectual powers, and give a very good idea of his characteristically lively treatment of a subject which in most hands becomes dry and boring. Whether it is by accident or design that the editor has adopted the same title as Streeter's *The Four Gospels* (which was published only some three years before these lectures were delivered to the Catholic undergraduates at Cambridge University) does not appear, but they outline the general tenor of his answer to that book. Those who wish to examine for themselves the grounds upon which Abbot Chapman's views are based must turn to his posthumous *Matthew, Mark and Luke*, wherein his arguments for the traditional order of the Gospels are set out in detail, but the Catholic layman and priest who merely wish to know what this eminent Catholic authority believed to be the truth about the Synoptic Problem will find all he wants in this little volume.

Dom Gregory has done the work of editing with skill. Of course, if Abbot Chapman had been alive today to edit his own lectures he would have corrected certain views and statements in the light of more recent research and debate. For instance, the discovery and publication of the Chester Beatty papyri between 1929 and 1937 would have



led him to modify considerably his praise of the "neutral" text of Westcott and Hort. Again, when he came across something idiotic or silly he never hesitated to say so, however eminent the author, and Wellhausen comes in for his share of condemnation for sponsoring "an absolutely idiotic theory" about the origin of St. John's Gospel. But though Abbot Chapman certainly meant what he said at the time, it is debatable whether he would have liked such strong statements to appear in cold print. Nevertheless it was a wise decision to print the lectures exactly as they were delivered and then to refer the reader to the larger *Matthew, Mark and Luke* for fuller explanations; for it enables the reader to recapture the atmosphere of those thrilling and absorbing discourses delivered by one of the most original and fascinating personalities of modern times.

Dom Gregory has added two useful appendices, giving the testimony of the early Fathers and the decrees of the Biblical Commission relating to the four Gospels, as well as a number of useful footnotes. What has been for him an act of filial piety to the memory of a great scholar and man of prayer will be a great boon to all those who wish to know the reasons for the Church's retention of the traditional order and arrangement of the Gospels, and who wish in the light of that knowledge to love and study them more.

J. B. ORCHARD.

*Control of Life.* By Halliday Sutherland, M.D. (Burns Oates and Washbourne, Ltd. 1944. 10s. 6d. net.)

DR. SUTHERLAND's latest book deals with a field of controversy in which he has already done gallant service. For material he has drawn extensively on the files of the League of National Life which was jointly founded by the author and a distinguished Anglican lady Mrs. John Clay, of Cambridge, some sixteen years ago. He laments, with reason, that this now defunct League never received the support from Catholics which it should have done, and his own tenacity is all the more creditable. In the thirties the supporters of the Catholic view of medico-ethics were playing on a hopeless wicket. It is never easy at the best of times to persuade the multitude by arguments based on a forgotten natural law, and population changes are notoriously hard to make intelligible. Warnings about a shrinking birth-rate naturally fell unheeded on ears deafened by the wails of 4,000,000 unemployed. Yet faith in the teachings of the Church has rarely been more quickly and dramatically justified. Today Dr. Sutherland can point with grim amusement to the Birth Control clinics, now busy staking out a claim in the treatment of sterility, and to erstwhile exponents of the "quality not quantity" theory today vociferously proclaiming that large families are really great fun. Not less striking is the appearance of a powerful ally in Sir W. Beveridge, who has warned the public that the progressive ageing of the population is

one of the most serious problems that the nation will have to face. He prophesies a panic over population about 1960, when it will be too late. Lord Nathan also has pointed out that by 1971 there will be 9,500,000 old people to be supported by only 29,000,000 men and women of working age. Graver still, "there will be only 7,500,000 children coming along compared with 12,000,000 in 1901 (p. 30). Both these eminent non-Catholic observers attribute the national dilemma to "deliberate choice"; the Catholics add that as this choice was made in defiance of moral laws, the disastrous end was preordained from the beginning.

These are the lessons which Dr. Sutherland rams home with his well-known vivacity and wealth of illustration. His chapters on "How Nations Die", "Losing an Empire", "Why Doctors have Small Families", "Children's Allowances", and others, contain many valuable tables and should constitute a mine of information for Catholic controversialists.

It is widely believed that the general fall in the birth-rate (which as the author shows occurs also in Catholic communities) is not wholly due to voluntary action but also to some loss of the fertility of both sexes. In discussing possible causes Dr. Sutherland ventures rather rashly on uncertain ground which the lay enquirer would do well to avoid. Whatever the merits of 100 per cent wholemeal bread and of unpasteurized milk, it is far from established that they have much connexion with human fertility and still less with Catholic ethics. Incidentally, the Irish passion for white flour hardly supports either hypothesis.

The concluding chapters, which deal with the Safe Period, require special mention in view of the acute differences of opinion within the Church as to the advisability of disseminating such knowledge. The ethical aspects are here frankly and clearly set forth in a way very helpful to a practising doctor, but there will be less agreement as to the wisdom of printing a full Calendar of fertile days calculated by the Ogino-Knaus method. It is true that these doctors have for the first time put our knowledge of the potential fertile days on a sound physiological basis, but this method is very difficult of application as it requires skilled observation of the woman's gynaecological rhythm. Experts advise that a doctor should be consulted in every case (p. 233). The danger then of putting these safe period Calendars into lay hands is not so much the possibility of fostering immorality (for persons contemplating such acts would certainly prefer the simpler mechanical contraceptives), but the much greater likelihood that a woman for whom pregnancy would be dangerous might make an error in calculation. Dr. Sutherland will, however, have many supporters for his decision to include the information.

L. FAIRFIELD.

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